PREVALENCE AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE WORKPLACE CYBER COMMUNICATIONS IN THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

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Abstract

Substantial evidence regarding the prevalence and impact of traditional face-to-face workplace bullying revealed that nearly two million Australian employees experience some form of bullying each year, costing the national economy up to $36 billion in stress-related and other expenses. In contrast, literature addressing employees' perceptions on workplace cyberbullying and its consequences remain sparse. Recent studies have revealed that cyberbullying's unique capacity for anonymity, global broadcasting and instant access anytime and anywhere suggests this negative online communication behaviour is separate to traditional face-to-face bullying. Furthermore, a literature gap exists as to the prevalence and impact of workplace cyberbullying in the Australian public sector. To address this, three studies were conducted across Local, State, Territory and Commonwealth Australian public services using sequential exploratory mixed-methodology and framed within *Social Information Processing* (SIP) and social psychology theories. This investigation encompassed two phases: Phase 1 included twenty-four face-to-face anonymous interviews and 127 unnamed online survey respondents; Phase 2 comprised a quantitative study of 463 unidentified online survey respondents. In line with SIP, significant statistical correlations and qualitative data were found between perceptions of task- and person-related workplace cyberbullying prevalence and increased workplace stress, reduced job performance, and a general dissatisfaction regarding the effectiveness of existing public sector culture (legislation, policies and governance frameworks) in dealing with this new workplace phenomenon. A less clear association occurred between workplace cyberbullying and job satisfaction. Theoretical and practical implications of this research are discussed.

Keywords

Cyberbullying, Face-to-face bullying, Job satisfaction, Job performance, Job stress, Online bullying, Organisational culture, *Social Information Processing* (SIP) *Theory*, Workplace bullying, Workplace cyberbullying

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
APS	Australian Public Service (Commonwealth)
APSC	Australian Public Service Commission
APSED	APS Employment Database
CNAQ	Cyber Negative Acts Questionnaire
CMC	Computer-Mediated-Communication
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
LIPT	Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terror
NAQ-R	Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised
OCQ	Organizational Culture Questionnaire
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
RQ	Research Question/s

Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

QUT Verified Signature

Signature:

Date: 30 September 2015

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This large-scale study, comprising 614 participants, investigated Australian public sector employees' perceptions about workplace cyberbullying, its prevalence rates and consequences. This research used *Social Psychology Theory* and *Social Information Processing Theory* as the theoretical framework by which to examine this phenomenon. Substantial research has documented the individual physical and emotional effects, and organisational costs, of traditional face-to-face workplace bullying (Boucaut, 2001). These costs include rising psychological injury claims that have led to high organisational insurance premiums (Comcare, 2014b). However, these costs should be considered in light of research indicating many people refrain from submitting claims and further underestimating the work related costs (Dollard et al., 1999), thus suggesting the costs may be even higher. Relatively little is known about the effects of workplace cyberbullying in Australian workplaces, and even less is known of this phenomenon within the context of Australian government organisations.

This study is pivotal within an Australian context. At this juncture, only one known Australian workplace cyberbullying study has been conducted (Privitera & Campbell, 2009), while only a relatively small number of international workplace cyberbullying studies have been progressed (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Smith et al., 2008). In this regard, the two research questions, together with five hypotheses, addressed by this research have yet to be verified within the context of Australian public sector organisational environments, thus making this research unique.

As observed by Patchin and Hinduja (2012), "If you ask five people to define cyberbullying for you, you will probably get five somewhat different answers." (p. 14). In describing juvenile and school-based online bullying, Patchin and Hinduja (2012) state "cyberbullying" occurs "when someone repeatedly harasses, mistreats, or makes fun of another person online or while using cell phones or other electronic devices." (p. 15). In this way, researchers may allude to "cyberbullying and online harassment without limiting behaviors to particular forms or devices." (p. 15).

Similarly, Tokunaga (2010) espoused "cyberbullying" as a term that best encapsulated online bullying and internet harassment as "…any behaviour performed through electronic or digital media by individuals or groups that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to inflict harm or discomfort on others" (p. 278). More recently, Monks and Coyne (2011) described youth and adult cyberbullying as "bullying behaviour that occurs through media and communication devices [and] include hurtful or abusive mobile telephone calls, text messages, email, abusive or threatening statements made in chat rooms, on bulletin boards or via newsgroups...posting of inappropriate photographs, videos or comments on social networking sites, web pages and blogs" (p. 214). While terms describing this phenomenon are currently mutable, researchers agree that the new technologies are being used by perpetrators to connect to the internet in order to overtly, or anonymously, send text, verbal or image-based messages aimed at making the target feel threatened and disempowered (Li, 2007; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Patchin & Hinduja, 2012; Smith et al., 2008). In this regard, Weatherbee and Kelloway (2006) assert that, "In our increasingly computer-enabled workplaces, individuals are using the capabilities of ICTs to engage in a wide range of behaviours that may be conceived of as aggressive, hostile, antisocial, uncivil, or event criminal" (p. 446).

In this research, the term "workplace cyberbullying" was used interchangeably with the term "negative workplace cyber communications," which was developed to facilitate the first study in which face-to-face interviews were conducted with twenty-four public servants. In the first interview with a senior public servant, the informant suggested excluding the word "bully" in the interview invitations as the term can be viewed as emotive and unproductive. Negative cyber behaviour, or negative cyber communications, can encompass (a) information trading for personal gain, (b) the illegal promulgation of corporate or employee personal information, (c) identity theft, and (d) reputational defamation leading to a loss of career and financial security (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). In line with previous workplace cyberbullying research (Coyne et al., In press; Farley, Axtell, Sprigg, & Coyne, 2013; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004), the term "workplace cyberbullying" in this research was used interchangeably with the term "online workplace bullying". The term "traditional face-to-face bullying" was used interchangeably with the terms "offline

bullying", "online aggression" or "online harassment". Cyberbullying literature uses a variety of terms to describe the behaviour, including "cyber-abuse", "online-abuse", "cyber-harassment", "electronic bullying", "electronic harassment", "electronic abuse," and more (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013).

In line with juvenile and youth cyberbullying research (Kowalski, Limber, & Agatston, 2008), this thesis makes no distinction between cyberbullying and these others terms as evidence suggests targets and victims view these forms of negative cyber communications as variations of cyberbullying, irrespective of whether or not the perpetrator is anonymous. It is evident, from the raft of definitions and their usage, that the field is complex and changing. This study, thus, stands to shed light on a complex and changing nature of the field by providing, for the first time, empirical evidence of the phenomenon and it consequences for workers and workplaces. This research used the Australian public sector as a convenience sampling frame due to (a) the researcher's over 20 years' experience across two public services and six portfolios, and (b) the public sector's pervasiveness across the whole of Australia. This research is both timely and necessary for Australian and public sector workplaces.

Figure 1.1 (p. 4) provides a snapshot of the scale and scope of Australia's public services, as background to the current study. As of December 2014, up to 11.6 million Australian workers were employed nation-wide (ABS, 2014b), of which 1.9 million were employed across hundreds of Commonwealth, State and Territory, and Local public sector agencies (ABS, 2014a) and represent a diverse sampling frame. Therefore, given this diversity and that government employees in general represent one in six Australian workers (ABS, 2014a, 2014b), this research will be crucial in understanding this new workplace phenomenon within an Australian context, and assist in the development of nation-wide anti-cyberbullying workplace intervention and prevention strategies.

As indicated in Figure 1.1, up to two million employees experience traditional face-to-face (offline) bullying each year (AHRC, 2011, 2012, 2015) at an annual cost of between $6 to $36 billion to the national economy (Australian Productivity Commission, 2010).

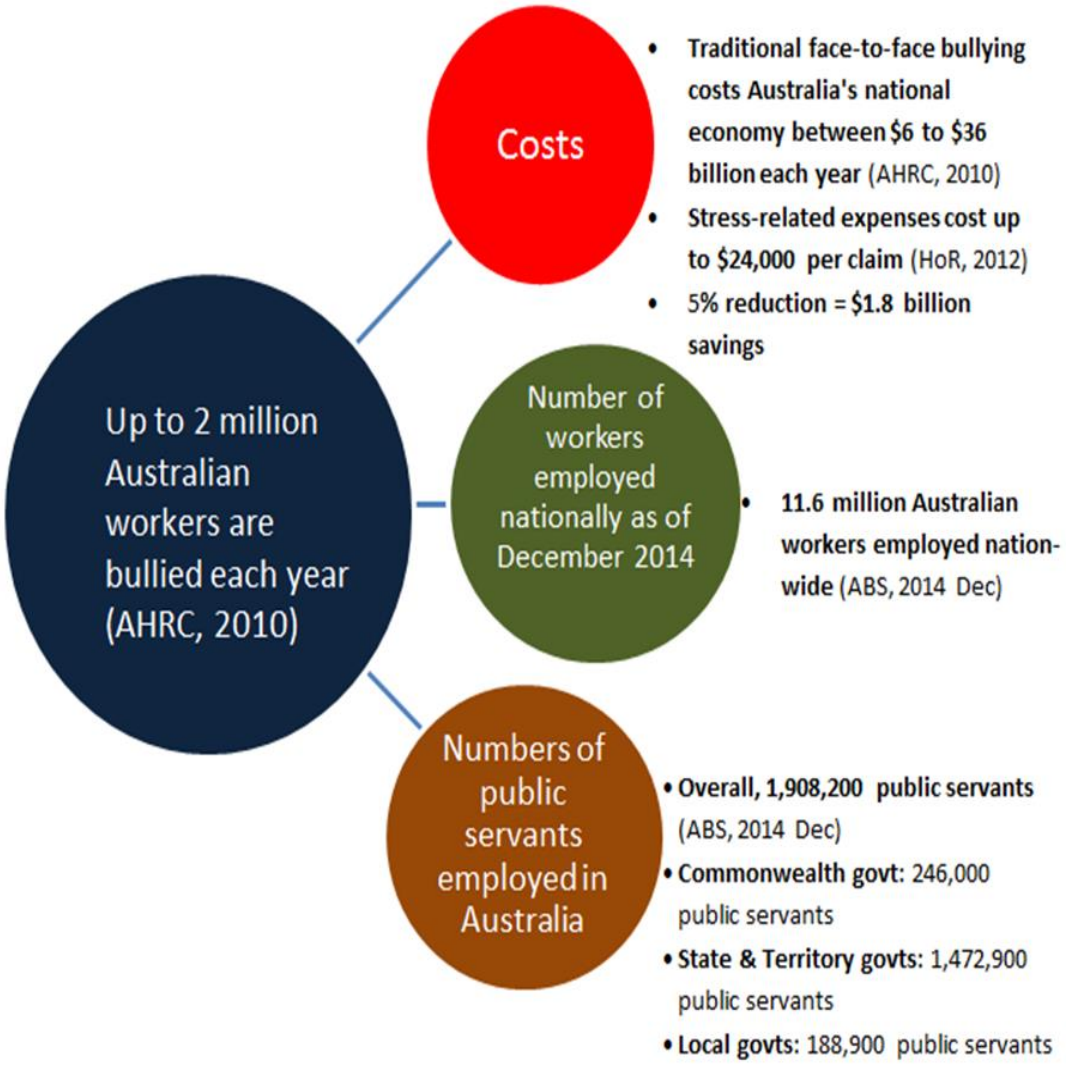


Figure 1.1. Australian public sector in context.

Given the probability that offline bullying is just as likely to be experienced by public servants as any other Australian employee (APSC, 2013c, 2014b), it is probable that a significant percentage of the nearly two million government employees will experience traditional face-to-face workplace bullying. A significant proportion of the expenses of the costs attributed to traditional face-to-face workplace bullying relates to stress-related health expenses, which on an case by case basis can cost up to $24,000 per claim (House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Education and Employment, 2012). These figures suggest a modest

5% reduction in traditional face-to-face workplace bullying would culminate in a saving of nearly $2 billion, that could be used to boost Australia's workplace productivity. However, these figures do not yet differentiate between the costs between of traditional face-to-face workplace bullying and workplace cyberbullying.

Given that cyberbullying has often been viewed as a manifestation of negative social behaviour using technology, it has tended to be conceptualised as similar to traditional face-to-face bullying behaviours (Coyne et al., In press; Smith et al., 2008). In this regard, the conceptual similarities between traditional face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying are that they both (a) repeatedly, (b) are intended to be hurtful, (c) is often intense, and (d) makes the target feel powerless (Rigby, 2002; Rivers, Chesney, & Coyne, 2011). However, recent studies of face-to-face workplace bullying (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2009, 2011; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2003; Vartia, 2001) and cyberbullying (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Monks & Coyne, 2011) suggest that cyberbullying be considered a separate issue to traditional face-to-face bullying. Indeed, this body of work describes cyberbullying as more intense due to its capacity for anonymity, public mass broadcasting, and ability to access workers anytime and anywhere. Given the extreme nature of workplace cyberbullying, this research seeks to understand the prevalence rates and impact of this phenomenon on employees' health, job performance, and organisational productivity that could be vital for Australian workers' current and future well-being and productivity. Due to the national spread of Australian public servants, and the diversity of their employment (i.e., from bus drivers, nurses, teachers, police officers to policy writers and project managers), this study will provide valuable empirical evidence and insight into how government employees perceive workplace cyberbullying and its consequences. In this regard, findings from this study have the potential to be generalised across the Australian workforce.

Traditional face-to-face or offline bullying within organisational contexts have been examined over several decades (Brodsky, 1976; Mantell, 1994), yet with relatively few adult workplace or organisational cyberbullying studies have been conducted. Given the conceptual similarities between offline and online bullying literature (Besley, 2009; Coyne et al., In press; Smith et al., 2008), the depth of offline bullying literature (Einarsen, 1999; Leymann, 1996; Coyne, Randall, & Seigne, 2000), and relative dearth of adult cyberbullying studies, this research looked

to offline workplace bullying and youth cyberbullying studies. In this respect, the researcher acknowledges that a reliance on past multi-disciplinary inquiries into organisational and traditional face-to-face workplace bullying, and youth cyberbullying studies can cloud research (Weatherbee, 2010).

Other research challenges arise from a lack of an agreed international workplace cyberbullying definition and a specific workplace cyberbullying measure (Farley et al., 2013), and the difficulties posed by numerous research methodologies that tend to obfuscate data comparisons (Kowalski et al., 2008; Patchin & Hinduja, 2012; Roland, 2011; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). The lack of evidence for cyberbullying in the Australian public sector workforce also made this research challenging. In this regard, while the Literature Review provides an entrée into the current findings around both (a) cyberbullying and (b) workplace/workplace cyberbullying, this study also placed the phenomenon within the context of the relatively larger field of face-to-face workplace bullying and youth-based cyberbullying (Keith & Martin, 2005; Ybarra, Diener-West, & Leaf, 2007).

Rationale supporting the two research questions and five hypotheses are covered within this introductory chapter, the sections of which are entitled (a) background, (b) context of Australian public sector and workplace bullying, (c) research purposes, (d) significance, scope and definitions, (e) focus and research questions, and (f) thesis outline. The Literature Review in Chapter 2 qualifies, defines and contextualises the behaviours generally perceived as traditional face-to-face (offline) workplace bullying and workplace cyberbullying (online bullying). Within this context, the Literature Review concentrates on cyberbullying and what is currently known of its impact on employees generally. Particular emphasis is placed on workplace stress, job satisfaction, work performance and organisational culture, all of which shape the two Research Questions (RQs), and five hypotheses. The RQs and hypotheses are listed in section 1.5.

Chapters subsequent to the Literature Review include the research design and methodology (Chapter 3), which includes a section on ethics and limitations. Chapters 4 and 5 pertain to the collection, analysis and results obtained from Phase 1's two qualitative studies, encompassing the face-to-face interviews and qualitative anonymous online survey, while Chapter 6 regards Study 2's quantitative study. These three chapters provide similarly entitled sections including (a) procedure and

collection method, (b) analysis and methodology, (c) results and findings, and ending in a conclusion section. The final chapter, entitled discussion and conclusion (Chapter 7), uses the principle of complementarity by which to conduct a holistic discussion across the three studies to strengthen and corroborate each study's findings and conclusions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Plano Clark, 2010).

Finally, this research is relevant within the context of education in general, given the study's focus on the consequences of workplace cyberbullying and the implications for anti-cyberbullying education and training in the Australian public sector with respect to prevention, intervention and resolution programs. In this way, there is the potential to reduce the number and associated costs of workplace bullying and cyberbullying and to enhance the productivity of both workers and organisations. Given the extreme nature of workplace cyberbullying, the current research sought to understand its prevalence rates and impact on employees' health, job performance, and organisational productivity, all vital components of workers' current and future well-being and productivity. In this regard, findings from this study have the potential to shed light on employers' legislated duty-of-care requirements, and employee-management policy and practices across the Australian workforce.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Einarsen (2000) referred to offline workplace bullying research as a process of "unveiling an organizational taboo" (p. 7) to describe the need to first identify and transcend social boundaries prior to implementing cultural change. In the same sense, this research sought to unveil "an organisational taboo" by exploring an emerging form of negative workplace behaviour, cyberbullying, and how this new behaviour is potentially impacting public servants working in Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local government organisations. The term "workplace bullying" was first used by Leymann (1996) to describe workplace harassment and mobbing. It is a form of organisational behaviour that is a widely recognised social variable that is difficult to identify, resolve and prevent (Boucaut, 2003; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). Workplace mobbing regards a target being bullied by a group or team of subordinates or peers, colleagues, supervisors at work (Leymann, 1996), while workplace harassment is the repeated, inappropriate or unreasonable treatment of a target that creates a risk to health and safety (*WHS Act 2011*).

Prior to the advent of the new "cyber-employee," conventional wisdom generally subscribed to the notion that organisational human resource management areas had carriage of developing, implementing and monitoring employment policies and procedures to support supervisors in regulating workplace behaviours (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, & Wright, 2009). Given the resource limitations now placed on most private and government agencies' human resource areas, this convention is increasingly untenable as more responsibility is now placed on supervisors and managers to regulate workplace behaviours, some of whom lack the requisite insight, experience or training (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2009, 2011). Evidence indicates that the increasingly "computer-enabled" or "internet-enabled" workplaces (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006, p. 446), have metamorphosed the workforce into highly technologically educated employees who use a plethora of cyber platforms, such as social media, to constantly connect with their work and/or social life. According to Weatherbee and Kelloway (2006), this new online work environment enables predisposed employees to circumnavigate traditional behavioural disciplines that are currently enshrined within explicit social and organisational systems and processes (e.g., laws, policies and governance processes).

Yet, this research is not seeking to espouse an ideology that human aggression, and, by deduction, bullying, is a new phenomenon. Indeed, one of the earliest written observations of bullying behaviour was recorded in *The Trojan War* (Strauss, 2006). In this story one of the central characters, Hector, is described as Trojan's greatest warrior at that time and who loses a pivotal fight with Achilles, a character stemming from Greek mythology. Strauss (2006) conjectures that Homer regards Hector's failure to win the fight as stemming from his bullying egotism and arrogance. In this regard, prior to the last four decades, harassment and bullying behaviour was regarded as a quasi-accepted, institutionalised behaviour found within schools and universities, hospitals, military and policing environments (Lewis, 2006). Institutions, being rules based, develop implicit, and sometimes explicitly, endorsed rituals aimed at "toughening up" vulnerable young recruits or sophomores (Zimmerman, 2012).

That these behaviours are increasingly deemed as inappropriate is reflected by changing community attitudes and parliamentary reviews (House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Education and Employment, 2012), and scholarly research

(Boucaut, 2003; Liefooghe & Mackenzie-Davey, 2001). Traditional face-to-face workplace bullying research (Einarsen et al., 2011; Estes & Wang, 2008; Hoel & Giga, 2006; Turney, 2003) has proven that prolonged exposure to face-to-face or offline workplace bullying and harassment results in an increase of workplace stress and erosion of individuals' mental and physical health. This in turn undermines employees' capacity to sustain high levels of work performance (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Lim & Cortina, 2005), leading to reduced organisational effectiveness (Cortina, 2008; Di-Martina et al., 2005).

According to Boucaut (2001), organisations' regulations and rules reflect those governing the society in which they are located. Yet, in line with changing social and community expectations and education regarding the impact of adverse organisational behaviour on employees (Mayhew, 2007; Van War, 2005), organisations have yet reached a state of Utopia where all employees feel equally empowered to work to the best of their abilities (Mayhew, 2007; Wilson, 2010). Ritualised bastardisation and hazing behaviours (i.e., institutionalised workplace harassment and bullying) are still reported, albeit as examples of behaviours that are inconsistent with modern perceptions of moral and ethical behaviour (Borstorff, Graham, & Marker, 2007). Modern social expectations are reflected in changing laws (Balkin & Davis, 2013; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001), and are observed in amended legislation. For example, Brodie's Law saw the inclusion of workplace stalking under the *Crimes Amendment (Bullying) Act 2011* after the suicide of a young Australian café employee. Despite these amendments, it is still possible to read or watch news editorials about individual employees, or groups, engaging in hostile, antisocial, uncivil, or even criminal behaviour in work contexts and across Computer-Mediated-Communications or CMCs (Lewis, Sheehan, & Davies, 2008). In this research, CMCs include internet enabled workplace desktop computers and mobile smart devices. A smart device is an electronic device that can connect to other devices (i.e., mobile smartphones and tablets) or networks through various wireless protocols such as WiFi, Near Field Communication (NFC), Bluetooth, and 3G, that operate both interactively and autonomously (Mumtaz & Rodriguez, 2014).

Organisations and their employees are increasing reliant upon the ever changing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) or CMCs to conduct business (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). It is therefore unsurprising that these

cyber platforms are associated with reports of online and offline workplace bullying acts (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). For example, a recent case considered by the Fair Work Commission concerned a workplace bullying claim by DP World and Maritime Union Australian employees about inappropriate comments conducted outside normal work hours on a work website (Howe, 2015). Technological advances now allow people to communicate at any time during the day or night with their families and friends, internal and external clients, colleagues, supervisors or subordinates (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Van War, 2005). Within this context, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC; 2012) has reported a worrying trend of online bullying or bullying using technology. Interestingly, the term "cyberbullying" was first made synonymous with juvenile and youth online behaviour (Keith & Martin, 2005; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006, 2012). Ybarra et al., 2007), despite evidence showing employees' use of a range of internet enabled desktop and mobile smart devices to convey cyber messages (Acas, 2012).

1.2 CONTEXT

Employees' increasing use of mobile cyber technology is significant within the context of the Australian public sector. Commonwealth legislation developed over the past few decades to protect employees and public servants from workplace hostilities, such as the *Public Service Act 1999*, *Fair Work Act 2009*, or *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, do not account for the range of online technologies, its accessibility, range and dissemination capabilities (Kowalski et al., 2008). Indeed, evidence of the increasingly topical nature of this phenomenon, and changing nature of the work environment, was apparent in a Commonwealth public service "whole-of-service wellbeing" document, entitled the State of the Service Report 2012-13 (the Report). This Report conducts the following activities:

> identifies the year-to-year trends in workforce participation and capability across the APS [Commonwealth Australian Public Service]. The report also details the initiatives and human resource management practices of APS agencies during 2013–14. This year's State of the Service report is the 17th annual report on the state of the APS that Australian Public Service Commissioners have presented to parliament. The report has been significantly enhanced since it was first Tabled in 1998. This year, the State of the Service report has been organised around three key agency capability

> themes, namely: Efficiency, Effectiveness, [and] Evaluation. The report contains an overview addressing key contemporary issues in the APS. The remaining nine Chapters of the report are grouped under the three key themes outlined above… provide a focus for understanding a range of organisational capability issues in the APS.
>
> (APSC, 2014b, p. xiii)

The subject of workplace cyberbullying was observed for the first time in this annual public sector health assessment (APSC, 2014b). According to the Commonwealth's Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) this Report gathered data from a number of sources, including,

> …agencies employing at least 20 staff under the *Public Service Act*. All 100 APS agencies, or semi-autonomous parts of agencies, that were invited to participate in the online agency survey in June 2014, completed the survey. These agencies are listed in Appendix 2. APSED contains information about recruitment, mobility and separations for all ongoing and non-ongoing employees.
>
> (APSC, 2014b, p, xiv)

Within the context of employee health and wellbeing, this document described cyberbullying as "the online harassment of [Commonwealth public service] employees by clients or members of the public" (APSC, 2014b, p. 81), and that the consequences of increased social media usage in the Commonwealth public sector remained "unknown". Additionally, the Commission released agency-level policy guidance that recommended managing cyberbullying as a new client-oriented risk (APSC, 2013b), together with additional guidance stating that internally-based cyberbullying (between government employees) be resolved within the guidelines set by the *Public Service Act 1999* (APSC, 2012a). Within this context, the Report (APSC, 2013c) noted that 2% of the employees reported experiencing or observing some form of workplace cyberbullying, in additional to 16% reporting experiencing face-to-face bullying and harassment. Only 39% of Commonwealth public servants reported confidence in their respective agency's anti-bullying and harassment policies and processes in preventing or intervening on their behalf. For unknown reasons, the census asked participants only to comment on social media and to exclude workplace email as a source of cyberbullying.

The impact of workplace cyberbullying on government employees' performance is an important factor particularly in light of a work environment where government organisations are increasingly expected "to do more with less" (Dollard, 2003; Leary, Gerard, & Bingham, 2006). Within this context, contemporary workplaces reveal an increased reliance on new technologies and Cyber-Mediated Communications (Dollard, 2003), such as social media, to offset resource and budgetary shortfalls to client-services (Lee, 2002). This research asserts that the challenges associated with an increased reliance on cyber communication technologies is a risk in terms of negative cyber communications directed between government employees, and against employees by external clients.

1.2.1 Australian public sector

This research focuses on workplace cyberbullying in the Australian public sector. Given the complexity of the Australian public sector, the chapter now turns to a description of the legislative and policy obligations driving government organisations, and how such mandates govern an agency's procedural frameworks and impact on employee behaviour and agency culture. According to the ABS (2014a), as of June 2014, 1,908,200 million Australian public sector employees worked across Local (188,900), State and Territory (1,472,900) and Commonwealth government department and agencies (246,400). These different public services employ staff under a range of Federal, State and Territory Constitutions and public sector specific legislation. In accordance with the Westminster system, the public service, or the Executive arm, represents one of three governance groups (Australian Government Directory, 2014). These three groups encompass (a) the Parliament including Federal, State and Territory Parliaments, (b) the Executive or Australian public sector, and (c) the Judiciary. Government staff work within a range of employment-related legislation that recognises both the nature of their service to the government of the day (e.g., neutral, apolitical), and their workplace conduct and ethical framework (APSC, 2013c, 2014b).

Table 1.1 displays how this code of conduct is enshrined within service-specific legislation.

Table 1.1.
Legislation governing Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local public servants' conduct

Public service	**Legislation governing employees behaviour**
Commonwealth	Public Service Act, 1999
Australian Capital Territory	Public Sector Management Act, 1994
Northern Territory	Public Sector Employment and Management Act, 1993
Victoria	Public Sector Management and Employment Act, 2004
New South Wales	Government Sector Employment Act, 2013
South Australia	Public Sector Act, 2009
Western Australia	Public Sector Management Act, 1994
Queensland	Public Service Act, 2008

Source of data: Australian Government ComLaw (Clth). (2015, June 21). *Commonwealth legislation and notices from the Commonwealth Government Notices Gazette from 1 October 2012.* Retrieved from www.comlaw.gov.au

As shown in Table 1.1, each public sector provides a code of conduct, or code of ethics, as a catalogue of workplace behaviours that are expected and legally enforceable. Each code of conduct is enshrined in law and articulates a threshold of behaviours and guiding values by which all government employees are expected to uphold. In this way, the behaviour expected of all Australian public servants thus reinforces the Australian public's confidence both in the Government of the day and in the public sector (APSC, 2013c, 2014b). According to the APSC (2013c, 2014b) legislative mandates shape public sector-wide and agency-specific policies that form the explicit procedures, rules and regulations enacted, or enlivened, through governance processes. Indeed, governance processes that are clearly aligned to policy and legislation constitute a measure by which culture and internal behaviours are "naturalised" or established (APSC, 2013c, 2014b).

In describing the Australian public sector, it is generally viewed as a national and highly-diverse employer, retaining public servants in positions roles such as executives (i.e., Secretaries, Chief Executive Officers and their deputies), managers and staff, teachers, nurses, bus drivers, park rangers, project managers, scientists and more (APSC, 2013c, 2014a, 2014b). Given the ubiquity of mobile devices, public servants are generally comfortable with social media technologies and use them to communicate with one another and with internal and external customers and clients (Australian Productivity Commission, 2010). In a general sense, public sector agencies traditionally relied on their Human Resource sections to mitigate and resolve workplace bullying, as indicated by the workplace bullying inquiry by the House Standing Committee on Education and Employment (2012).

The notion of what is now termed "cyberbullying", or "online bullying", or "bullying using Computer-Mediated-Communications" (CMC; Campbell, 2005; Coyne et al., In press; Ramirez, Walther, Burgoon, & Sunnafrank, 2002), is thus relevant for the Australian public sector. This point is particularly salient in light of claims made by organisational and workplace bullying researchers that aggressive online behaviour has most likely infiltrated most workplaces (Baruch, 2005; Coyne et al., In press; Piotrowski, 2012a, 2012b), together with consistent reporting of traditional workplace bullying in government organisations (APSC, 2013c, 2014a, 2014b), it is likely cyberbullying is also prevalent across public sector agencies. Given that public sector employees represent one in six Australian workers (ABS, 2014a), it is imperative that this phenomenon is understood within the government sector to develop Australian best-practice intervention and prevention strategies.

1.2.2 Link between public sector behaviour, culture and governance

As indicated above, public servants abide by a set of legislative and policy codes of conduct and codes of ethics to articulate and regulate their workplace behaviour (APSC, 2013c, 2014b). These legislative and policy mandates form the basis for explicit rules and regulations and governance processes, and form one of the measures by which government agencies develop and assess their efficiency and effectiveness (Peters, 2004). Clear legislative and policy-based guidelines enable organisations to develop "good governance" processes. These good work practices are those which clearly align to business outcomes and are recognised through mature consultation practices and meeting procedures, high level service quality

protocols, clarity of roles and responsibilities, and good working relationships (Peters, 2004).

According to Peters (2004), "good governance" practices are recognised by clear accountability and the transparency of processes, adherence and responsiveness to legislation, inclusive participation, and effectiveness and efficiency. As indicated by the APSC, the *Public Sector Act 1999* provides for "the establishment and management of the [Commonwealth] APS... to provide a legal framework for the effective and fair employment, management and leadership of APS employees… to establish [the] rights and obligations of APS employees" (p. 55). In such conditions, managers and staff are appropriately empowered, within reason, to make and implement the best possible decisions (APSC, 2010). Such practices also determine the level by which staff accepts and actively supports the explicit behavioural codes. Within this contextual basis it would be reasonable to suggest that workplace bullying may be an objective, observable and measurable organisational behaviour. Governance, or "good governance", pertains to the development of good work practices that align to an organisation's business outcomes and may be recognised through, for example, transparent consultation and decision making practices and meeting procedures, high level service quality protocols, clarity of roles and responsibilities, and good working relationships (Peters, 2004). When legislation and policy are naturalised through good government, managers are empowered to make and implement the best possible decisions without fear of reprisal.

Conversely, workplace bullying and harassment is often difficult to observe and measure, as the behaviours are often covert and difficult for external observers to objectively record (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004; Einarsen et al., 2003). Consequently, anti-bullying organisational policies are inherently characterised by incumbent processes that tend to be ambiguous and use a range of different terminologies that can disconcert and confuse those employees who attempt to report the behaviour (White, 2000). Indeed, this often transparent juxtaposition between the overt human resource policies and actual, and covert organisational behaviour, has been linked to a term entitled "organisational deviance" (Robinson & Bennet, 1995). This term and others are discussed in full within the Literature Review.

1.2.3 Public sector and workplace bullying

According to a recent Commonwealth "whole-of-service wellbeing" document, known as the State of the Service Report (APSC, 2014b), face-to-face workplace bullying behaviour was viewed as becoming unproductive and uneconomical. In this regard, the Report identified a number of constituent human capital challenges for the APS, including "uncomfortably high perceptions of bullying" and "an unexplained rising trend in unscheduled absence" (APSC, 2014b, p. 7). Workplaces characterised by high levels of face-to-face bullying also report high levels of unscheduled employee absenteeism, as employees withdraw from the work environment, thus resulting in unproductivity (Kivimäki, Elovainio, & Vathera, 2000).

These statistics do not separate traditional workplace face-to-face bullying and workplace cyberbullying, so it is currently unknown if these figures represent a mixture of online and offline workplace bullying. In an attempt to lower these statistics, and as a result of the re-drafted Commonwealth *Work Health Safety Code of Practice for Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying* (Safe Work Australia, June 2013), as of January 2014 the Commonwealth's Fair Work Commission now offers anti-bullying advisory services to workers. These anti-bullying advisory services are offered to all Australian employees under section 789FD of the *Fair Work Act 2009*, and enable workers to request the Commission to mediate on their behalf to stop workplace bullying, or make a determination to raise an order to stop the behaviour (Kettl, 2006; Leary, Gerard, & Bingham, 2006; Van Wart, 2005). While these changed laws do not explicitly relate to cyberbullying behaviours, employees with appropriate evidence can request a hearing on cyberbullying cases (Howe, 2014). Yet, it is likely that increased expectations that public servants "do more with less" in a constantly changing work environment has enhanced the risk of workplace cyberbullying (Grogan & Dann, 2002). This issue is has been recognised within public sector reports into traditional face-to-face bullying:

> In recent years the public sector has been required to adapt and modify in order to embrace the changing environments within which it operates. These challenges will continue, as new responses are developed to accommodate a public administration, which has to assimilate and respond to a rapidly

> changing environment. Indeed this may be one reason for the poor performance of management as described by the SA Employee Ombudsman. Managers stretched beyond their level of competence, skills and learning are trying to maintain their 'old' level of control in a 'new' operating environment. The Employee Ombudsman noted that this environment of change in Australia gives rise to and encourages the bullying behaviour that is threatening the sector.
>
> (Grogan & Dann, 2002, p. 12)

If the research presented in this thesis finds workplace cyberbullying is perceived by public servants as manifesting in government agencies, and is deemed by employees as more aggressive and pervasive in eroding work performance and undermining work/life boundaries, then all Australian employers have a duty of care to mitigate this risk under the WHS and Fair Work legislation (AHRC, 2014). Secondly, given the current excessive costs of traditional face-to-face bullying (Comcare, 2014a, 2014b), it is likely the added intensity and pervasiveness of workplace cyberbullying is placing further financial burdens on both private and public organisations. And finally, if workplace cyberbullying is perceived by Australian public sector employees as prevalent and impacting their job performance, then this research can potentially assist in informing researchers and legislators about other Australian employees' experiences, and modify existing law, or develop new legislation that better protects Australians working in government and non-government organisations.

1.2.4 The researcher

To promote transparency, the researcher acknowledges her personal motivations for conducting this research. Over the past 23 years, the researcher gained public service experience across five Commonwealth and two Australian Capital Territory portfolio agencies, with the last seven of those at senior managerial and acting executive roles. Her areas of expertise encompassed analysis, business and risk management, human resources and domestic/international liaison, and policy development and program delivery. Within this context, the researcher has witnessed various forms of offline and online workplace bullying across two Australian public services and the impact of this behaviour on colleagues, staff, and middle to senior management. She found that workplaces undergoing high employee turnover and odd or dysfunctional behaviour were generally characterised by an

accepted threshold of aggressive behaviours that, coupled with poor work practices, tended to erode employees' confidence of being fairly treated. This research constitutes a first step in developing a published academic study aimed at identifying the lived experiences of public servants with the view of developing nation-wide anti-cyberbullying legislation, policies and training for all Australia employees.

1.3 PURPOSES

This research investigated the prevalence and consequences of negative workplace cyber communication, or workplace cyberbullying, using a convenience sample of national public sector employees. The findings of the study are anticipated to inform the relevant Australian public sector laws and governance frameworks and thus improve the level of protection afforded public sector employees, and indeed all Australian workers, in mitigating and preventing workplace cyberbullying events. The researcher considers this thesis a critical preparatory measure for organisational transformations that currently rely on cyber communications (Wilson, 2010), while also developing enjoyable and safe work environments for employees, and a sound economic future for Australia.

1.4 RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This research is significant for two reasons. Firstly, while it is known that up to two million Australian workers are bullied annually (AHRC, 2004), at an annual cost of up to $36 billion (Australian Productivity Commission, 2010), it is significant that the prevalence rates and consequences (and therefore cost) of workplace cyberbullying remains unknown. Secondly, given public servants represent 16.4% of Australia's working population (ABS, 2014a), that this research has the potential to be generalised across Australia's working population. In this regard, Weatherbee and Kelloway (2006) observed, "the domain of ICT misuse includes many more harmful behaviors, from both an interpersonal and an organizational perspective." (p. 446). Indeed, the Literature Review revealed a significant gap regarding Australian public servants' perceptions about cyberbullying in their organisations and workplaces. Additionally, a substantial gap exists as to the impact of this new construct on employees' workplace stress, job satisfaction and performance, and perceptions as to the efficacy of public sector's cultural frameworks (legislation, policy and processes) in responding to this new workplace phenomenon. The hidden costs of cyberbullying

is a topical issue given the increased usage of social media and cyber technologies by Australian public sector organisations to communicate with one another and with their clientele (APSC, 2013c, 2014b). These organisations are increasingly using external and internal social media and cyber platforms including Facebook and Twitter, and email, text messaging and so on, across internet enabled mobile smart devices (APSC, 2013c; Mumtaz & Rodriguez, 2014)). Given this fast changing work environment and cultural shift, it is quite possible public sector employees are potentially confused as to what constitutes good cyber behaviour, and may be susceptible to the effects of negative forms of cyber communication (otherwise known as cyberbullying) (APSC, 2013c, 2014a, 2014b).

In a similar fashion, is it possible in today's high stress and constantly changing work environment that miscommunications may accidentally occur between employees using these cyber technologies or CMC platforms (Walther, 1992, 1996). Given that the changing technological work environment now enables employees to be contacted any-time and anywhere during the day or night, it is possible that such contact could be perceived as bullying behaviour, particularly for employees attempting to make sense of this new world and using pre-cyber legislation as their model. If public servants perceive this and other forms of negative workplace cyber communications as workplace cyberbullying that is linked to an erosion of wellbeing, job performance and satisfaction, then employers have a duty of care to develop specific intervention and prevention strategies.

Additionally, this thesis is topical within the context of QUT's Faculty of Education, given the implications of this study's findings on the Australian public sector's education and training programs. Educational implications arising from this research is particularly relevant to a range of contexts. These contexts include pre-service education, enhanced induction training conducted on entering a government agency, and ongoing in-training and education programs developed to maintain employees' knowledge and understanding of the workplace.

To address these points, the research aimed to investigate public servants' perceptions regarding workplace cyberbullying prevalence rates and consequences. With this in mind, it aimed to identify whether workplace cyberbullying has influenced government employees' perceptions regarding their work performance, job satisfaction, workplace stress levels and the effectiveness of the respective public

sectors' culture (i.e., governance frameworks) in addressing the outcomes of this behaviour.

1.5 RESEARCH THEME, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

This research addresses the literature gap through the following focus question: What is the prevalence, and what are the consequences, of negative workplace cyber communication (cyberbullying) in the Australian public sector? This question was explored using a two-phased mixed-methods sequential exploratory research design across three studies, which formed two research questions. Both research questions influenced both the three studies and encompassed:

RQ1. How do Australian public sector employees perceive cyberbullying as manifesting within Australian public sector work environments?

RQ2. How do Australian public sector employees perceive workplace cyberbullying as affecting their workplace stress, job satisfaction and work performance, and organisational culture?

As a consequence of these two RQs, five hypotheses were developed and shaped the quantitative study (Phase 2, Study 3) :

H1. Public servants perceive cyberbullying as manifesting in their workplaces (prevalence, RQ1).

H2. Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as positively correlated with increased levels of workplace stress (consequences, RQ2).

H3. Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as negatively correlated with overall work performance (consequences, RQ2).

H4. Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as negatively correlated with feelings of job satisfaction (consequences, RQ2).

H5. Workplace cyberbullying levels are negatively correlated with employees' perceptions of organisational cultural efficacy (consequences, RQ2).

1.6 OVERVIEW OF STUDY

In response to these two research questions, the ensuing Chapters will encompass (a) Chapter 2: Literature Review, (b) Chapter 3: research design and methodology, (c) Chapter 4: Study one face-to-face interviews, (d) Chapter 5: Study

two qualitative online survey, (e) Chapter 6: Study three quantitative online survey, and a holistic discussion within (f) Chapter 7: Discussion and conclusion and culminating from the three studies' results. The researcher used the Literature Review to first examine the broad elements of aggressive human-to-human behaviours within the context of the violence continuum and *Social Psychology Theory*.

Given the lack of research into workplace cyberbullying, this Literature Review examined how the term "cyberbullying" was first established through the more extensive schoolyard and youth cyberbullying research. This broad view gradually narrowed to what is currently known about the conceptually similar traditional face-to-face workplace bullying and workplace cyberbullying constructs. The Literature Review thus discusses traditional face-to-face, or offline bullying, cyberbullying and workplace cyberbullying, these constructs' prevalence and measurement challenges, consequences, and antecedents, the rationale underpinning the five hypotheses, and concludes with the theoretical model.

Research design and methodology are specified in Chapter 3 and include the overarching rationale substantiating the use of sequential mixed methods in this research. Chapter 3 also details the ethics and limitations, and culminate in a short conclusion and implications section. This research used *Social Information Processing* (SIP) *Theory* (Walther, 1992, 1996), through the lens of social psychology, to examine two research questions across two phases. Both research questions were addressed using a large-scale investigation of over 600 Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local public servants. This investigation included two qualitative studies (Phase 1), comprising twenty-four face-to-face interviews and 127 survey respondents, and one quantitative study (Phase 2), encompassing 463 survey respondents. Given the exploratory nature of this research, sequential mixed methodology thereby enabled the qualitative data to enrich, inform and enhance the quantitative findings, while the quantitative data reinforced and strengthened the qualitative findings (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 provide the research methodology, analysis and results specifically attributed to Study 1: Face-to-Face Interviews (Chapter 4), Study 2: Qualitative Online Survey (Chapter 5) and Study 3: Quantitative Survey (Chapter 6). Each chapter provides a concluding section and summary statement. Chapter 7

provides an in-depth discussion of all the three studies' results (this holistic discussion and conclusion is provided in lieu of a discussion within Chapters 4, 5 and 6), together with an over-arching concluding statement that converges the holistic discussion into key themes, theoretical and practical implications.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter firstly examined "cyberbullying" within the context of schoolyard and youth cyberbullying research. This "helicopter view" tapered into a discussion regarding current traditional face-to-face workplace bullying research, and arguably its technological and conceptual "sibling", workplace cyberbullying. This Literature Review (the Review) presented in this chapter consists of a number of overarching sections. This chapter's sections thus incorporate (a) traditional face-to-face, or offline, bullying, (b) online bullying or cyberbullying, (c) similarities and differences between offline and online bullying (d) prevalence and measurement challenges, (e) rationale (RQ1): hypothesis 1, (f) consequences, (g) rationale (RQ2): hypotheses 2, 3 and 4, (h) antecedents, (i) rationale (RQ2): hypothesis 5, (j) face-to-face workplace bullying and cyberbullying | practical implications, (k) the theoretical model, and (l) Chapter 2's conclusion and implications.

This Review is crucial in developing a rationale for the research questions and hypotheses, and the background to workplace cyberbullying. This point is particularly relevant given this research constitutes the first published study examining Australian public sector employees' perceptions regarding the prevalence and consequences of workplace cyberbullying.

As shown in Figure 2.1, this Review investigated workplace cyberbullying through the lens of social psychology (Allport, 1954) and *Social Information Processing Theory* (Walther, 1992, 1996), by firstly examining traditional forms of harassment and bullying as a social and workplace construct (Boucaut, 2001, 2003). As observed by Weatherbee and Kelloway (2006), "workplace aggression and violence do not take place in isolation" (p. 94). Indeed, workplace violence has been described as a continuum that begins as discourtesy, disrespect, and intimidation, that escalates into harassment and bullying, retaliation, verbal assault, and lastly as physical threats and aggression (Einarsen, 1999; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Mayhew, 2007; Rogers & Kelloway, 1997; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006).

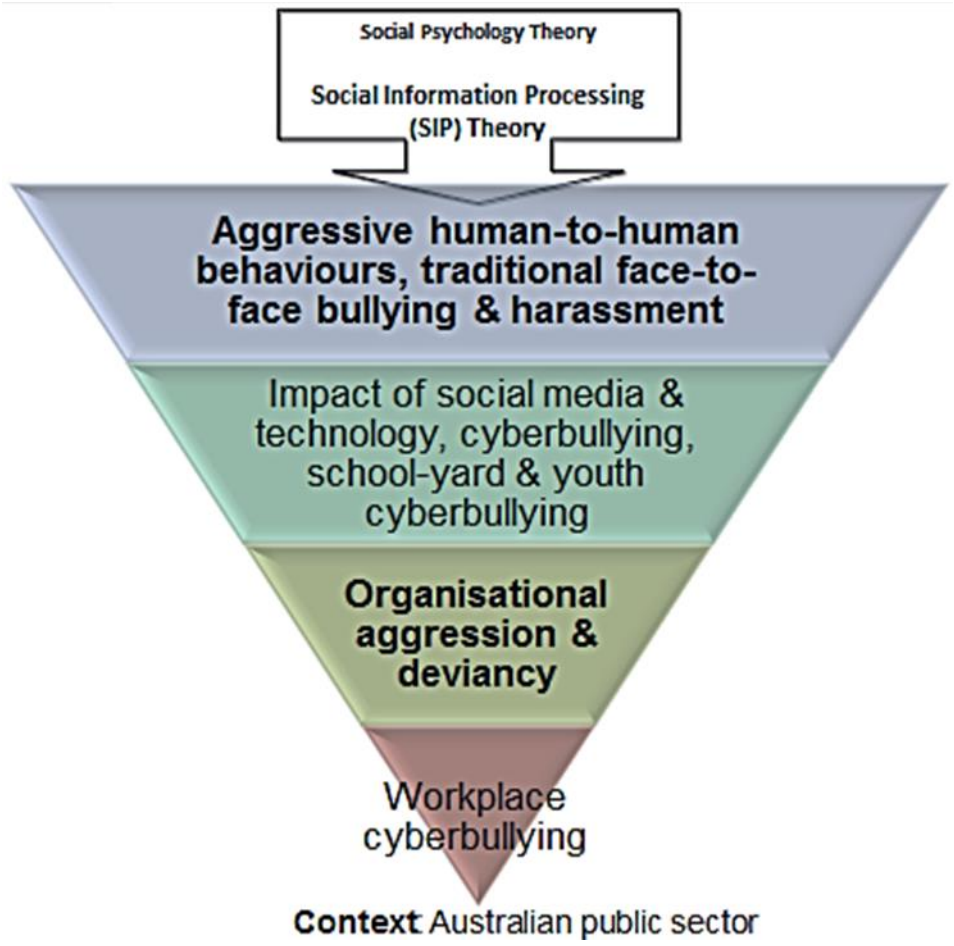


Figure 2.1. Researcher's pictorial illustration summarising the Literature Review.

Boucaut (2001) succinctly argued that traditional face-to-face "workplace bullying is a serious international problem that is bereft of a theoretical basis for understanding it as an organisational problem" (p. 72). Workplace cyberbullying is

outlined within the global context of mobile cyber technology and its impact on human-to-human communications (Ramirez et al., 2002), together with key findings arising from juvenile and youth cyberbullying studies (Hinduja & Patchin, 2012; Keith & Martin, 2005; Ybarra et al., 2007). Included in this Review is an analysis of how current and emerging mobile technologies are changing the social rules governing our workplaces and are distorting previously clear demarcations between work and home (Monks & Coyne, 2011). The conceptual similarities and differences were compared between traditional face-to-face bullying (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2011), juvenile and youth cyberbullying (Besley, 2008; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006, 2011, 2012; Smith et al., 2008), and workplace cyberbullying (Farley, Coyne, Sprigg, Axtell, & Subramanian, 2015; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Zhang & Leidner, 2014).

2.2 FACE-TO-FACE OR OFFLINE BULLYING

This section and five ensuing sub-sections consider traditional face-to-face bullying, and provides the contextual basis for section 2.3 entitled online bullying or cyberbullying. These two sections, together with the section pertaining to the similarities and differences of workplace offline and online bullying and the prevalence and measurement challenges, support the rationale underpinning the first research question and Hypothesis 1. In this regard, this section encompasses provided in the following subsections and include, (a) traditional bullying, (b) definitions: traditional face-to-face bullying, (c) power, (d) repetitiveness, and (e) intent and intensity.

2.2.1 Traditional bullying

The first study of workplace bullying and harassment (i.e., as opposed to sexual harassment) was conducted in the 1970s by Brodsky (1976), and further enhanced by European and UK workplace bullying researchers, such as Einarsen (1999), Leymann (1996), and Randall (in Coyne, Randall, & Seigne, 2000). In line with workplace cyberbullying, research into traditional face-to-face workplace bullying used juvenile and youth face-to-face bullying as the genesis in defining bullying at work (Björkqvist, 2001). Within this context three stages of workplace bullying were defined including, (Stage 1) indirect aggression, such as gossiping and backbiting, (Stage 2) open verbal confrontations and social rejection of the victim,

and (Stage 3) the target, or victim, is forced to leave the workplace thus losing his/her employment and pecuniary independence (Björkqvist, 2001).

Within these three stages, five types of generic bullying behaviour are described (Einarsen et al., 2009; Hershcovis, 2011; Zapf, 1999). These include (1) work-related and (2) person-related bullying, (3) social isolation, (4) verbal threats, and (5) physical violence. These stages and types of traditional face-to-face workplace bullying also represents a trajectory across a violence continuum that begins as discourtesy and disrespect and transmogrifies into serious forms of verbal and physical intimidation (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Mayhew, 2007; Rogers & Kelloway, 1997; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). In this sense, bullying can be quietly introduced so gradually onto a target's awareness that it may take weeks or even months before the target realises the degree of applied manipulation (Lutgen-Sandvic & Tracey, 2012). Additionally, face-to-face workplace bullying affects men and women working across various hierarchical strata and arises from both internal and external sources (Einarsen et al., 2011).

The sub-sections below will firstly define traditional face-to-face bullying and workplace bullying, the behaviour's underlying conceptual parts (i.e., power, repetitiveness, intent and intensity), and terminology. This section will be followed by a discussion on cyberbullying and workplace cyberbullying, which culminates in a synopsis regarding the similarities and differences between offline and online bullying.

2.2.2 Definitions | Traditional face-to-face bullying

Literature uses a variety of meanings to explain the plethora of terminologies to enunciate bullying behaviour; indeed this very diversity of terminology has developed into an influencing factor for researchers in this field (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2009, 2011; Cortina, 2008; Dietz et al., 2003; Di-Martina et al., 2005; Einarsen et al., 2011; Hockley, 2003; Lim et al., 2008; Namie, 2007). The level of complexity associated with defining what is and is not bullying has challenged researchers in their attempts to unravel the underlying causes behind adult harassment and bullying. In this context, traditional face-to-face workplace bullying, also known as offline bullying, is generally viewed as a form of human interpersonal aggression expressed through hostile, anti-social behaviour within a workplace, organisational or corporate setting (Salin, 2001). According to Zhang and Leidner

(2014), employees experiencing this behaviour feel systematically or persistently exposed to extensive and repeated harassing behaviour that includes bullying, incivility, social undermining, and interpersonal conflict from (a) supervisors (downward bullying), (b) colleagues (horizontal bullying), and/or (c) subordinates (upwards bullying).

As a consequence of research conducted in the 1990s (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Olweus, 1993), and in an effort to simplify workplace bullying studies, researchers use some general criteria by which to conceptualise the behaviour. These criteria include firstly, the repetitiveness and intensity (or duration) of the perpetrator's behaviour (as perceived by the target), secondly, the intent of the perpetrator (e.g., malicious or accidental), thirdly, targets' perception that the behaviour is unfair and unwarranted (de Vries, 1991; Rigby, 2002). This third element, often linked to a fourth criterion, regards the target's perception of a power imbalance in which they feel powerless to protect themselves (Hershcovis, 2011). In this regard, traditional face-to-face workplace bullying is described as "…repeated behaviour that offends, humiliates, sabotages, intimidates, or negatively affects someone's work when there is an imbalance of power." (Privitera & Campbell, 2009, p. 3). Organisational bullying research (organisations are hierarchical, rules-based institutions) identified five elements of workplace bullying behaviours including:

> …threat to professional status (e.g., belittling opinion, public professional humiliation, accusation regarding lack of effort); threat to personal standing (e.g., name-calling, insults, intimidation, devaluing with reference to age); isolation (e.g., preventing access to opportunities, physical or social isolation, withholding of information); overwork (e.g., undue pressure, impossible deadlines, unnecessary disruptions); and destabilisation (e.g., failure to give credit when due, meaningless tasks, removal of responsibility, repeated reminders of blunders, setting up to fail).
>
> (Rayner & Hoel, 1997, p. 183)

These characterisations of workplace and organisational bullying are relevant in light of Mantell's (1994) notion that organisational bullying, harassment and incivility behaviours are generally linked to what is perceived as accepted social acts of workplace aggression (Mantell, 1994). This insight is supported by Einarsen et al., (2011) who described bullying at work as,

> …harassing, offending, or socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone's work. In order for the label bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process, the bullying behaviour has to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g., weekly) and over a period of time (e.g., about six months). Bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts. A conflict cannot be called bullying if the incident is an isolated event or if two parties of approximately equal strength are in conflict.
>
> (Einarsen et al., 2011, p. 22)

Within the context of this research, which investigated public servants' perceptions of the prevalence and consequences of workplace cyberbullying in Australian government organisations, a further criterion is added. This criterion is alluded to within these definitions and, within this research is entitled "culture." Organisational culture is important within government agencies (APSC, 2013c, 2014a, 2014b). In this regard, it constitutes the values, beliefs and conduct requirements that govern both workplace processes and employees' behaviour and interactions, and is a significant element within the context of the workplace (Boucaut, 2001, 2003). How workplace cyberbullying manifests within government agencies' unique cultural setting is discussed under section 2.9.

The following subsections detail the conceptual elements comprising face-to-face bullying and which include, (a) power imbalances between the perpetrator and target, (b) repetitiveness of the behaviour, and (c) intent of the perpetrator and the target's perception of the behaviour's intensity.

2.2.3 Power

Bullying and workplace bullying literature found that targets were more likely to perceive the behaviour as traumatic if they felt powerless to defend themselves (Comcare, 2014a; de Vries, 1991; Einarsen et al., 2011; Lutgen-Sandvick & Tracey, 2012; Rigby, 2002; Salin, 2001; Vartia, 2001; Zapf & Gross, 2001). Power imbalances between a perpetrator and target (or victim) is generally deemed a fundamental element in defining face-to-face workplace bullying, as in most cases the target is often attempting to defend themselves against an organisational superior (de Vries, 1991; Rigby, 2002). According to Einarsen et al., (2003), power

imbalances can arise from an authority figure such as a supervisor, or an influential individual or group who hold power as a consequence of their length of tenure or expertise (Einarsen et al., 2003). Olweus (1993) also found that power-based or dominating corporate behaviours are expressed in mutually interacting indirect or covert behaviour and direct or overt behaviour:

1. *covert power*, implicit, indirect and ambiguous forms of conflict and discomfort or stigmatisation through gossiping, exclusion or isolation, or
2. *overt power*, explicit, highly direct and recognisable forms such as verbal or physical attacks that cause immediate distress.

The former may be conveyed by gossiping by the target's peer-group, social isolation, or over management. In cases of supervisor-initiated bullying, the target may be bypassed for job opportunities, or be expected to conduct work that is above or below their capabilities, and thus feel set up to fail or underutilised (Salin, 2001). Transition, or escalation, from the covert to overt bullying behaviour occurs when targets are firstly exposed to a pre-determined set of negative oblique behaviours, such as gossiping or social isolation by colleagues or supervisors (Comcare, 2014a; Zapf, 1999). Targets experiencing the covert forms of power-based harassment and bullying can be lulled into a false sense of security, particularly if the work-relationship ostensibly develops along a false sense of mutual equality and respect (Einarsen et al., 2011; Zapf & Gross, 2001). If targets "catch on" to the behaviour early in the working relationship, and are experienced in this regard, then they have the option of diffusing the situation to prevent the violence continuum from escalating (Zapf & Gross, 2001). However, it can be hard to identify subtle forms of bullying.

When covert forms of bullying continue without any form of intervention, then the behaviour tends to escalate into more violent and overt acts of aggression, such as pranks aimed at embarrassing the target, or physical or psychological violence such as shouting (Einarsen et al., 2011). Given this behaviour is often unpredictable in nature, most targets are surprised and, at least initially, feel disempowered and unable to defend themselves, loose the respect of their co-workers, feel stigmatised and more likely to experience further attacks (Einarsen, 1999; Zapf & Gross, 2001).

The element of repetitiveness within the context of workplace cyberbullying is discussed under the section 2.3.4.

2.2.4 Repetitiveness

Much debate has arisen around what exactly constitutes repetitiousness within workplace harassment and bullying (Cross et al., 2009; Li, 2007). In face-to-face bullying, the issue of repetitiveness has often been a crucial element in separating bullying from other forms of workplace aggression, the latter of which tends to relate to one off occurrences (Vartia, 2001). Björkqvist (2001) observed that "human aggression is concerned, [with] social and cognitive factors" (p. 438). This finding supports more recent research indicating that the length exposure to workplace aggression increases the social and cognitive consequences for the target (Einarsen et al., 2010), as perceived by the target (Boucaut, 2003). Lutgen-Sandvic and Tracey (2012) found that a combination of repetitiveness and frequency (or exposure) to face-to-face workplace bullying can undermine the target's defences and affects their resilience. Research into the severity of long-term exposure to offline bullying has resulted in extensive studies into the causality between the behaviour's frequency (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly) versus length of time the target was exposed (e.g., conduct across four weeks or three, six months or 12 months and more) (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracey & Alberts, 2007). These studies' findings are discussed in section 2.7. The element of intent and intensity within the context of workplace cyberbullying will be discussed under the section 2.3.5.

2.2.5 Intent and intensity

While the combination of a repetitive and extensive bullying event may intensify the target's negative perceptions, the intensity is more keenly felt by the target if the perpetrator's behaviour is perceived as deliberate or malicious (Crawford, 2001; Vartia, 2001). Deliberate or malicious overt or covert bullying behaviour includes; (a) person-related bullying (e.g., slander, social isolation and insinuation about people's mental health), (b) task-related bullying (e.g., micro-management, inconsistent allotment or incompatible distribution of tasks, persistent criticism of a person and their work), or (c) physically-related bullying (e.g., verbal threats or physical aggression) (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen et al., 2010). Research also found that targets felt less affected if the perpetrator's behaviour if the bullying was as uncharacteristic and directed uniformly at all members of the group (Einarsen et

al., 2011; Hoel et al., 2004). This perspective changed if the perpetrator concentrated on one particular individual, or group, as the behaviour was then considered unfair (Hogh, Mikkelesen, & Hansen, 2011; Leymann, 1996; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Zapf, 1999).

Indeed, research has found that negative work attitudes (e.g., job dissatisfaction) tend to arise in response to employees perceptions of unfair treatment (Tepper, 2000). In this regard, a target was more likely to intensely feel the bullying behaviour if (a) the organisational processes were seen as unfair (i.e., access to natural justice) (Tepper, 2000), (b) the bullying episodes were frequent and extensive (Lutgen-Sandvic & Tracey, 2012), and (c) the perpetrator was believed to be maliciously motivated (Crawford, 2001; Vartia, 2001). This combination augmented the target's perceptions of the bullying behaviour (Boucaut, 2003) and intensified the impact (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen et al., 2010). These elements are important in understanding how aggressive human behaviour manifests within organisational settings and provides background for the less well-researched workplace cyberbullying construct.

Section 2.3 addresses the conceptual elements of power, repetitiveness, and intent and intensity online within the context of online bullying or cyberbullying. Subsections encompass material describing the global impact of cyber technology, schoolyard | youth cyberbullying, and cyberbullying definitions.

2.3 ONLINE BULLYING OR CYBERBULLYING

Given the relative dearth of workplace cyberbullying research, and lack of academic literature within the context of the Australian public sector, this section will firstly consider the evolution of cyber technology on human communications and the initial juvenile and youth online bullying studies. This will be followed by an investigation into existing workplace cyberbullying research, its prevalence and consequences, organisational antecedents and intervention and strategies within the context of the public sector (Keith & Martin, 2005; Ybarra et al., 2007). The sub-section 2.3.2, entitled schoolyard | youth cyberbullying studies, was included in this Review to develop a foundation for the more recent workplace cyberbullying research. This reasoning is in line with the rationale used by the first researchers who investigated traditional face-to-face workplace bullying in the 1970s (Björkqvist,

2001). These researchers used juvenile/school-based and youth face-to-face bullying as a starting point for traditional face-to-face bullying. Again, in a similar fashion to the early 1970-90s workplace bullying researchers, while workplace cyberbullying is reminiscent of juvenile and youth cyberbullying, there are important differences, particularly the competition for jobs and economic independence (Turney, 2003).

In this regard, the following subsections include; (a) global impact of cyber technologies, (b) schoolyard | youth cyberbullying studies, (c) definitions | cyberbullying and workplace cyberbullying, (e) power, (f) repetitiveness, and (g) intent and intensity, and (h) differences between workplace offline and online bullying. The similarities and differences regarding face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying are discussed in section 2.4.

2.3.1 Global impact of cyber technologies

The past decade has seen an unprecedented and exponential increase in the availability and use of global, ubiquitous, affordable, user-friendly, internet-enabled, mobile smart devices such as iPhones, laptops and notebooks, and tablets (e.g., iPads) across Australian homes, schoolyards and workplaces (Eivazi, 2001; Keith & Martin, 2005; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006; Ybarra et al., 2007). The creation of the iPhone in 2007 as the first "handheld, walk-around computer" (Grossman, 2007) created a globalised "mass connectivity" that has "enabled human generated data, and now machine generated data, to flood through our global networks…" (Livingstone, 2015, No ordinary disruption, paras. 5-6) and transform our work and home lives. Since 2007, the accepted view is that "computing doesn't belong just in cyberspace", it happens in the real world, anywhere and at any time (Grossman, 2007).

The "cultural change wrought by the internet has been profound." (Williams, 2015, p. 12). In this regard, researchers assert that mobile, online communications is transforming the way humans think, communicate and socialise (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013; Kowalski et al., 2008; Oliver & Candappa, 2003; Wang, Iannotti, Luk, 2010; Williams & Guerra, 2007; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Indeed, some workplace cyberbullying researchers have found that the lines between physical and virtual worlds are now so blurred (Monks & Coyne, 2011) that employees feel permanently connected to work irrespective of the time of day. Technology is both enhancing, and transforming, our private and workplace behaviour (Tidwell & Walther, 2002) on

both a conscious and subconscious level. Our near constant accessibility to mobile technologies is increasingly seen as a catalyst for changing the social rules governing our workplaces and blurring previously clear demarcations between work and home (Kraft, 2006).

It is important to realise that this transformation has human social psychology implications, particularly around accepted social norms, as the new technology increasingly enables people to instantaneously broadcast thoughtless or malicious online comments that can quickly escalate with dire consequences (Cross et al., 2009; Li, 2007). This changing environment has arguably developed new or refreshed roles and responsibilities for employers who have a duty of care to provide employees with a safe working environment (West, Foster, Levin, Edmison, & Robibera, 2014).

This sub-section introduced the impact of cyber technologies on human communications and behaviour. This is followed by subsection 2.3.2, which addresses the key findings obtained from the initial ground breaking juvenile cyberbullying research.

2.3.2 Schoolyard | Youth cyberbullying studies

According to schoolyard bullying and cyberbullying research conducted by Hinduja and Patchin (2008, 2009, 2013), traditional face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying are closely related. Juvenile and youth studies have found that online bullying is intense, malicious, may be quickly mass broadcast, and conducted anywhere and anytime (Patchin & Hinduja, 2012). Within the context of extensive cyberbullying research within the juvenile (school) and youth contexts, this construct has been tentatively defined as "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself" (Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, & Tippett, 2006, p. 1). However, given technologies' capacity to anonymously and publically mass broadcast one message or image, or "go viral" (Kowalski et al., 2008, p. 84), debate among scholars continues around the exact nature of "repetitiveness" and "power imbalance" respectively.

In considering early juvenile and youth cyberbullying research, the University of New Hampshire first noted the appearance of aggressive online schoolyard

behaviour as text messaging across mobile phones, and comments in online chat rooms and email (Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Wolak, 2000). This research indicated that young cyberbullying victims experience fear and helplessness (Beran & Li, 2005). This finding was substantiated in an innovative youth cyberbullying survey (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006), which found cyberbullying affected the young survey respondents both at school (32%) and at home (27%), thus blurring school and home boundaries. This ground-breaking study, together with subsequent research (Hinduja & Patchin, 2013; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010, 2011, 2012), resulted in numerous anti-cyberbullying educational and support programs for children and adolescents (Cross et al., 2009; Kowalski et al., 2008; Limber, 2006; Rivers & Noret, 2010; Ybarra, Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2007), including legislative intervention and prevention (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015).

Other Australian, UK, US and Canadian studies found juvenile and adolescent internet users who reported online harassment and bullying also self-identified as online and offline bullies, targets or witnesses, or a combination thereof (Cross et al., 2009; Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, 2013; Smith et al., 2008; Ybarra et al., 2007). These studies have established that traditional negative face-to-face of offline schoolyard behaviours are manifesting into negative cyber or online behaviours (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004), where both schoolyard bullies and their targets employ cyber platforms, sometimes in role reversals (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). Clearly this research and accompanying literature has provided insights and new understandings within the context of a new social construct.

Despite this early cyberbullying research, there are certain fundamental differences between schoolyard and workplace adult-to-adult cyber communication, making it essential that cyberbullying be explored within the latter context. Particular differences include the changed work expectations of being available on work matters day or night, technology's ability to cross work and home life boundaries (Lyytinen & Yoo, 2002) and capacity to quickly access mass public media domains using multipath cyber platforms to broadcast information globally either overtly or anonymously (Sproull, 1994). In explaining this new cyber work environment, Lyytinen and Yoo (2002) describe it as a "nomadic information environment" that includes "a heterogeneous assemblage of interconnected technological, social, and

organizational elements that enable the physical and social mobility of computing services" (p. 337).

This sub-section introduced the initial definitions and key findings identified through early juvenile and youth cyberbullying research, and is followed by sub-section 2.3.3, which pertains to workplace cyberbullying.

2.3.3 Definitions | Cyberbullying and workplace cyberbullying

This Literature Review shows that workplace cyberbullying offers greater and more immediate consequences for workplace employees (Coyne et al., In press; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Zhang & Leidner, 2014). This is partly due to the relatively recent combination of internet enabled mobile phones that provide "a fast and reliable means of communication, particularly with the instant feedback they give to the sender(s) of such messages." (Grigg, 2010, p. 143). Along with the advantages of instantaneous and mobile communications, youth and adult cyberbullying researchers (Gillespie, 2006; Grigg, 2010; Smith et al., 2008) have also identified a range of negative acts, including online "bullying, harassment, assault, abuse and stalking" (Grigg, 2010, p. 144). However, given the relatively recent advent of cyber communications, particularly internet enabled iPhones, it is perhaps unsurprising that the terminology and definitions explaining negative cyberbullying behaviours remain in flux, particularly as more cyber technologies are invented and operationalised by human users. Some of the terms were used before the label "cyberbullying" was developed (Monks & Coyne, 2011) include:

- cyber aggression has been submitted as an umbrella term to define aggressive CMC during which at least one participant employs language that causes harm to the recipient/s (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006).
- cyber incivility encompasses rude texting or computer-mediated work-based behaviours that breach codes of conduct (Lim & Teo, 2009);
- cyber abuse, cyber stalking or e-harassment, where personal information is used to harass a target's employment, reputation or safety (Conger, 2012),
- cyber flooding represents an attempt by an individual to control the online environment by messaging the same line of text (Turkle, 1995),

- cyber kicking refers to restricting (or isolating) access of certain users to chat rooms (Young, 1996), and
- cyber flaming constitutes unexpected explosions of anger and use insulting, uncivil, obscene, or profane language primarily a feature of CMC (Alonzo & Aiken, 2002).

In reading this list, it is immediately apparent is that the descriptions for cyberbullying are both complex and highly emotive. In this regard, cyberbullying is conceptually similar to traditional forms of face-to-face bullying, particularly given both forms use language describing the impact from the target's perspective (Boucaut, 2003). However, online bullying is different to face-to-face bullying in that it can be quickly globalised and anonymous. In describing adult cyberbullying, Li (2007) espouses the behaviour as incorporating,

> [the] use of information and communication technologies such email, cell phone and pager text messages, instant messages, defamatory personal websites, and defamatory online personal polling websites, to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others (p. 1779).

According to Zhang and Leidner (2014), employees are likely to perceive themselves as "systematically exposed to repeated negative treatment from supervisors, colleagues or subordinates by electronic forms of contact over a long period of time, in a situation in which the perpetrator has more power than the target" (p. 2). Organisational or workplace cyberbullying is thus defined as,

> bullying behaviour that occurs through media and communication devices [and] include hurtful or abusive mobile telephone calls, text messages, email, abusive or threatening statements made in chat rooms, on bulletin boards or via newsgroups...posting of inappropriate photographs, videos or comments on social networking sites, web pages and blogs
>
> (Monks & Coyne, 2011, p. 214).

This behaviour is therefore viewed as "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual using electronic forms of contact repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself" (Smith, et al., 2008, p. 376) and can be received by the target anytime during the day or night (Kowalski et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010). Perpetrators use cyber technologies to harm,

discompose, or defame the reputation of an individual, group and/or organisation (Besley, 2009; Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). Within this context, the impact of cyberbullying on employees in large, rules-based institutions, such as the Australian public sector, where competition for jobs and positional power constitutes a significant mediating factor (Turney, 2003), is significant.

The following subsections describe the conceptual elements of workplace cyberbullying, which mirror those described under face-to-face bullying. Consequently, the subsequent sections include (a) power (b) repetitiveness, and (c) intent and intensity.

2.3.4 Power

Face-to-face organisational bullying encompasses variations of overt power-based or covert and manipulating corporate behaviours that instil the target with a feeling of powerless (Olweus, 1993). Power imbalance is also significant within the context of workplace cyberbullying research where power imbalances may also be linked to the perpetrator's anonymity (Coyne et al., In press) and ability to publically mass broadcast (Slonje & Smith, 2008). Cyberbullying perpetrators have been found to use at least three forms of power (Kowalski et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010) and include (1) overt power, (2) covert power, and (3) anonymity. While the first two are used similarly to offline bullying (Olweus, 1993), in regards to anonymity, the perpetrator may create an online account under a pseudonym and use the social media technology to bully the target at work and home. The perpetrator's ability to use technology to hide their identity is unique (perpetrators of traditional bulling face their targets) and provides the perpetrator with a sense of power against which the target feels defenceless (Sproull, 1994).

Research indicates that workplace cyberbullying is often characterised by hierarchal and/or power-based environments requiring employees to adhere to their terms of employment including those articulating online and offline conduct (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011). The very detached nature of virtual cyber communications has been attributed to the disinhibition behavioural theory (Suler, 2004). This theory suggests that perpetrators who hide their identity behind technology feel invisible (Kowalski et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010) and powerful as

they believe they can administer their bullying online behaviour, while simultaneously avoid society's censure or punishment (Willard, 2007).

When workplace cyberbullying is conducted by supervisors, influential colleagues, staff and external clients as an additional tool in corporate power-struggles (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011) the online behaviour may not necessarily be anonymous (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013) as these perpetrators conduct professional communications across work accounts. However, the perpetrators' ability to use cyber technologies to openly cyberbully their work colleagues, supervisors and staff at work and home can also cause the target to feel defenceless (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Sproull, 1994).

Indeed, D'Cruz and Noronha (2013) found that online targets reported being pursued by a manager or boss often felt constrained by the "boundaryless, concrete, permanent, invisible and anonymous character [of the phenomenon]" (p. 324) across organisational information systems. These organisationally-based information systems are developed specifically as a "systematic arrangement for providing a defined group of people with information for purposeful action" (Werner, 2001, p. 61).

2.3.5 Repetitiveness

The element of repetitiveness is materially more complex in workplace cyberbullying. In the first instance, cyberbullying is again conceptually similar to traditional face-to-face bullying (Rigby, 2002) in that perpetrators use technology to consistently and repetitively bully a target over an extended period of time. In the second instance, however, cyber technology now enables perpetrators to simultaneously, and quickly, mass broadcast (Graumann, 1998) one Facebook post, blog or web comment, photo or video across public and organisational forums (Sproull, 1994). In this regard, one workplace email sent out to a group or across organisations, or uploaded onto social media and "viralise," resulting in embarrassment for the employee, and possible repercussions such as professional defamation, loss of employment and psychological injury (Kowalski et al., 2008; Li, 2007).

2.3.6 Intent and intensity

Research has found that the detached nature of online communication enhances the potential for miscommunication and uninhibited online communication and behaviour (Kiesler, 1986; Monks & Coyne, 2011). Cyber media's inability to convey accurate verbal and non-verbal conversational social cues across workplace text-based communications result in perpetrators who emotionally detach from (Kiesler, 1986; Suler, 2004), and lose empathy with, the recipient (Slonje & Smith, 2008). However, this detachment process augments when perpetrators hide their identity and anonymously cyberbully their targets, ostensibly without fear of punishment (Suler, 2004). The capacity for anonymity to develop into unethical social behaviour was raised as early as Plato who said, "…without accountability for our actions we would all behave unjustly" (Zhuo, 2010). The resulting detached, uninhibited and "troll-like" online communications and behaviour develop as a consequence of individuals who are unconcerned about what others think or feel, and feel safe from reprimand (Suler, 2004). This process can escalate gradually. For instance, a supervisor who is too distracted with managing numerous cyber messages to fully read and interpret each email, may misjudge the email's content and inappropriately respond (Baruch, 2005). Such miscommunications have the potential to quickly escalate to workplace cyberbullying (Giumetti, McKibben, Hatfield, Schroeder, & Kowalski, 2012).

In this regard, the more intense nature of cyberbullying arises from the comparative absence of CMC's verbal and non-verbal social cues and development of unethical, uninhibited, detached, empathetic communications (Kiesler, 1986; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Suler, 2004; Zhuo, 2010). However, the concept of "intent" remains somewhat limited to either:

- the perpetrator's conscious intention to cause harm or distress (Besley, 2009; Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006), or
- miscommunications occurring as a result text-based workplace cyber messages sent without the explanatory non-verbal social prompts within the context of an aggressive and stressful organisational culture (Walther et al., 2005).

Critically, workplace cyberbullying tends to more intensely perceived by targets than traditional workplace face-to-face bullying and harassment (Grigg, 2010). As observed by Grigg (2010), cyber messages, posts, videos, photos can be rapidly viewed, read and commented on, and immediately, anonymously and publically broadcast (Slonje & Smith, 2008). In this regard, one post, online comment or photo can be re-promulgated ad infinitum, across one or more groups, organisations or publically (Cross et al., 2009; Li, 2007).

2.4 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OFFLINE AND ONLINE BULLYING

As indicated in the sections above, for many years private and government organisations across the world have expressed an interest in workplace bullying (which is now manifesting as cyberbullying) particularly in how to manage and mitigate a form of social behaviour that research now indicates is both widespread and complex (Boucaut, 2003). Literature indicates that this workplace phenomenon is widespread (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Rayner 1997), albeit with unknown prevalence rates. The conceptual similarities and differences between traditional face-to-face workplace bullying and workplace cyberbullying are illustrated by the researcher in Figures 2.2 (p. 41) and 2.3 (p. 43). These comparisons are important to note, particularly given juveline and schoolyard studies (Beran & Li, 2005; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006, 2011) found traditional face-to-face bullying represents a strong indicator of cyberbullying (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Indeed, UK organisational research found cyberbullying (via email) to be at the same level as traditional face-to-face bullying (Baruch, 2005).

Figure 2.2 shows that the key conceptual elements applying to both traditional face-to-face workplace bullying and workplace cyberbullying remain generally consistent.

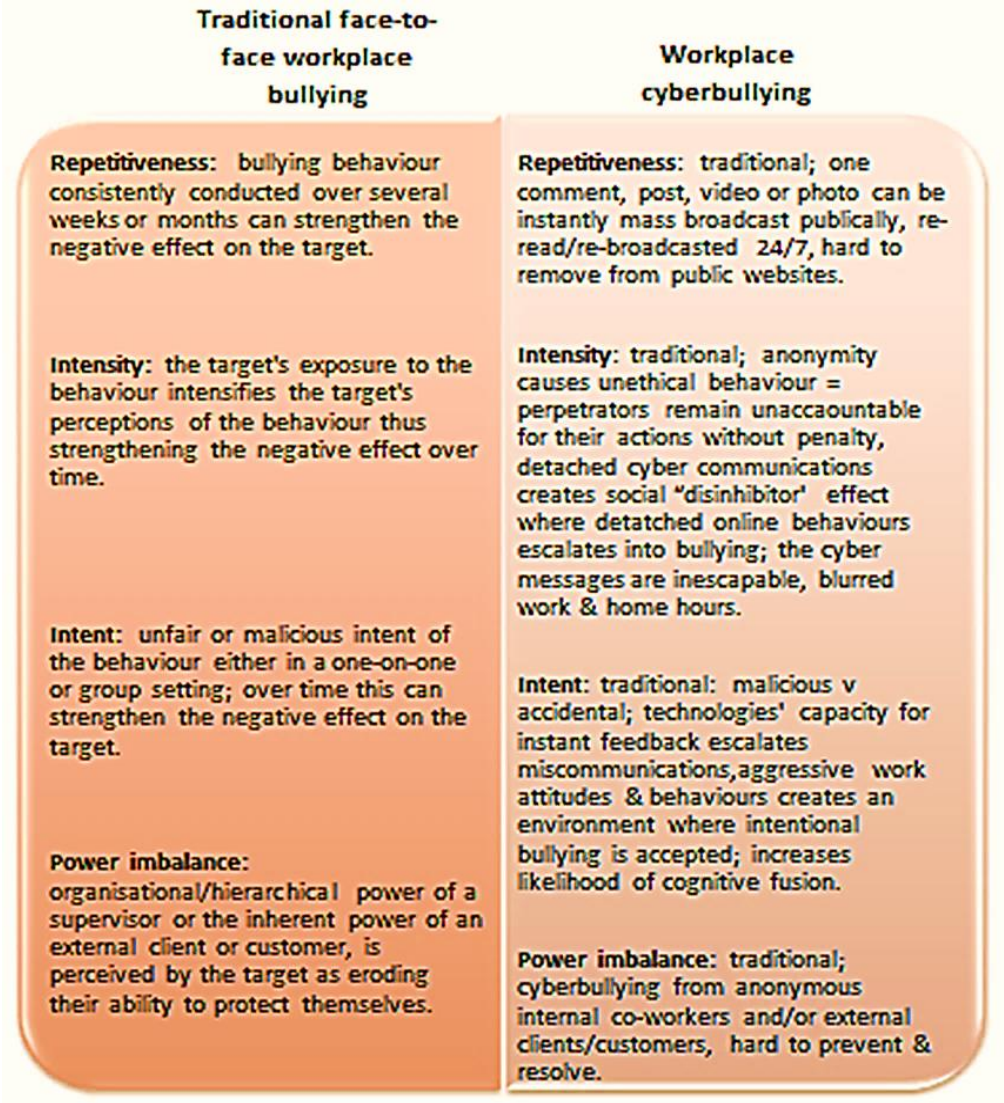


Figure 2.2. Researcher's list: Conceptual similarities and differences.

Generally, traditional face-to-face workplace bullying pertains to face-to-face repetitive and hostile interactions between aggressor/s and target/s, where the aggressor uses their hierarchical position, or influence to persistently harass the target/s (Zapf, 1999). These consistent elements, all of which are viewed from the target's perspective (rather than the bully's perspective) (Boucaut, 2003), include:

(a) repetitiveness - the extent to which the target feels exposed to the behaviour,

(b) intensity (or duration) of the perpetrator's behaviour as perceived by the target,

(c) the accidental or malicious intent of the perpetrator as perceived by the target, and

(d) the target's perception of power imbalance, where the target may feel powerless to protect themselves against a perpetrator who is placed in an organisationally powerful (as a boss) or a personally influential position (as an external client) (Rigby, 2002), both of whom use their position to undermine the target in some way.

Similarly, online bullying or cyberbullying in the workplace include the comparable elements, including repetitiveness, intensity and intent, and power imbalance that cause harm to the target (Cross et al., 2009; Li, 2007). However, the perpetrator's use of cyber technology, including anonymity and ability to "viralise" (Kowalski et al., 2008) or publically mass broadcasting one cyber text, verbal or visual message anytime during the day or night (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013)., intensifies targets' perceptions of cyberbullying (Slonje & Smith, 2008). In a workplace context, internal or external perpetrators use cyber technology to overtly or covertly (anonymously) embarrass the target to undermine the target's sense of self and professional reputation (Besley, 2009; Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006).

The increasingly use of mobile smart devices by junior and senior staff to conduct work both inside and outside normal work hours both facilitates inter and intra organisational collaboration (APSC, 2013b, 2013c), and fosters the potential for miscommunications (Walther, 2007, 2009). Within the context of this research, according to the APSC (2013), the Commonwealth agency responsible for developing and monitoring public sector employment matter, the impact of social media on government agencies is currently unknown. What is known is that cyberbullying can be conducted anonymously or overtly, anytime and anywhere, across internet enabled desktop computers and mobile smart devices (e.g., iPhones, tablets, laptops and notebooks) via cyber technologies (e.g., social media websites such as Facebook). However, it is currently unknown if this behaviour is occurring across Australian public sector agencies.

The potential exponential harm from workplace cyberbullying is shown in Figure 2.3.

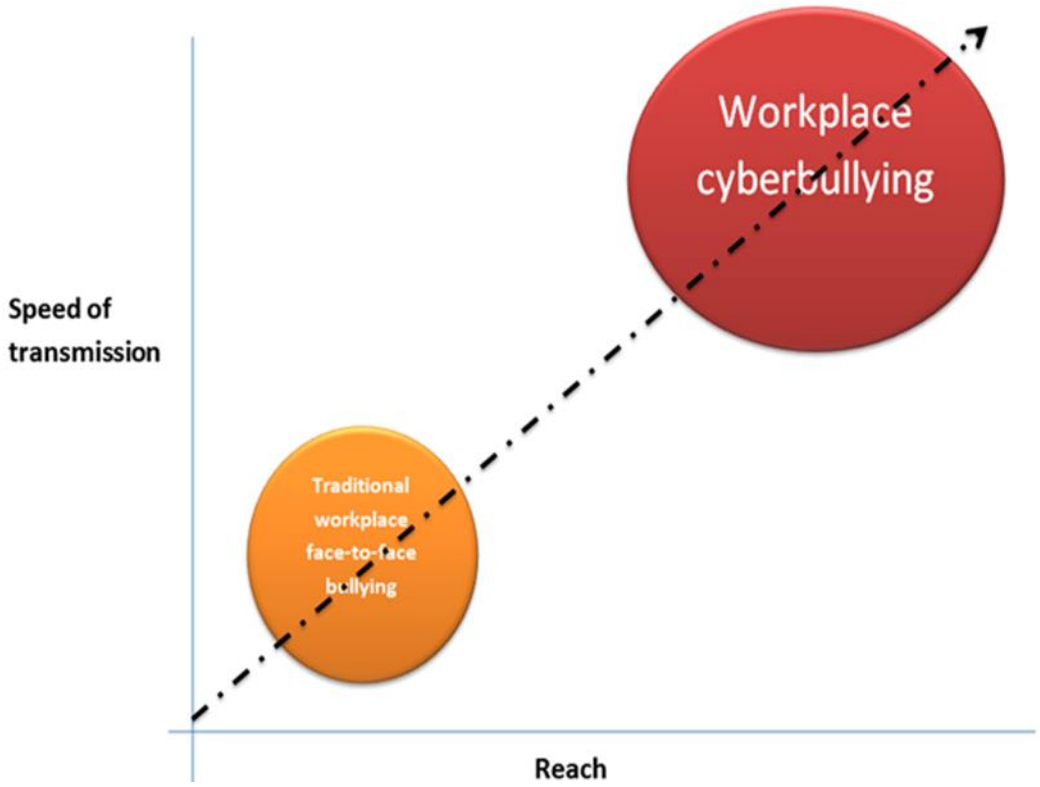


Figure 2.3. Differences between workplace face-to-face bullying and workplace cyberbullying.

This figure illustrates the key differences between face-to-face workplace bullying and cyberbullying. Face-to-face bullying at work generally occurs between two known parties or small group, is highly localised, with one bullying event occurring sequentially over time (Einarsen et al., 2011). Cyberbullying can occur instantaneously and anonymously, it can "viralise" across multiple, global and public cyber platforms, and be read and redistributed by an infinite number of unknown parties (Kowalski et al., 2008; Li, 2007). Cyber technologies' speed of transmission and global reach, together with the perpetrators' capacity for anonymity, augments the negative effects (Slonje & Smith, 2008) as perceived by the target (Boucaut, 2003). Additionally, workplace miscommunications (Giumetti et al., 2012; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Smith et al., 2008) now has increased potential to quickly escalate and intensify given cyber technology's capacity for instantaneous, and perhaps thoughtless, feedback (Grigg, 2010). If the target of such behaviour "buys into" the overwhelming and ongoing negative cyber commentary then they face the risk of cognitive fusion and could start to believe what is said about them (Hayes, 2004),

and seriously impact their work/life balance and emotional/physical welfare (Sproull, 1994).

2.5 PREVALENCE AND MEASUREMENT CHALLENGES

This Literature Review has so far explored the conceptual similarities and differences, definitions and background to (a) traditional face-to-face bullying and (b) cyberbullying and workplace cyberbullying. The following subsections address the challenges facing researchers of face-to-face workplace bullying, and whether these challenges face workplace cyberbullying researchers. These subsections encompass (a) how definitions impact prevalence and measures, (b) prevalence: face-to-face workplace bullying, (c) measurement challenges, (e) prevalence | workplace cyberbullying, and (f) measurement challenges.

2.5.1 How definitions impact prevalence and measures

The variety of meanings and terms that have been used to explain traditional face-to-face bullying has both influenced past research in this field, and challenged researchers attempting to compare findings (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2009, 2011; Cortina, 2008; Dietz et al., 2003; Di-Martina et al., 2005; Einarsen et al., 2003; Hockley, 2003; Lim et al., 2008; Namie, 2007). Given the influence face-to-face bullying research has had on cyberbullying studies, and the recent nature of this workplace construct, it is unknown if this research stream will face similar challenges, although some researchers suggest this is possible (Weatherbee, 2010). In this regard, this section expands upon the information conveyed within the sections entitled face-to-face or offline bullying, and online bullying or cyberbullying, to consider the prevalence and measurement challenges facing researchers of traditional workplace face-to-face bullying and workplace cyberbullying.

In determining bullying prevalence rates, researchers of traditional face-to-face bullying use the conceptual elements (i.e., power, repetitiveness, intent and intensity) developed as a consequence of research conducted in the 1990s (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Olweus, 1993) to define the behaviour. These elements are replicated in workplace cyberbullying, albeit within the context of cyber technologies. In the forthcoming sub-sections, face-to-face workplace bullying prevalence and measurement challenges are considered in sub-sections 2.5.2 and

2.5.3, while workplace cyberbullying prevalence and measurement challenges are discussed in sub-sections 2.5.4 and 2.5.5 respectively.

2.5.2 Prevalence | Face-to-face workplace bullying

Prevalence studies into traditional forms of workplace bullying can be greatly influenced by the type of research methodologies employed (Rayner, 1997; Salin, 2001) and terminology used. The language and definitions used to paint face-to-face bullying influences how the behaviour is perceived (Coyne, Seigne, & Randall, 2000). As an added complication, researchers who compare domestic and international research findings must first understand the context of different languages and cultures (Rayner & Hoel, 1997).

Studies across international and Australian public and private sectors (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Comcare, 2014a, 2014b) found that, despite employers' legislated duty of care to provide safe work environments (*WHS Act 2011*), workplace bullying is on the rise (Cortina, 2008; Di-Martina et al., 2005; Einarsen et al., 2011; Jagatic & Keashly, 2000; Johnston, Quinlan, & McNamara, 2011). The accepted view that normal workplace safety incidents and injuries are generally underreported points to the probability that workplace bullying incidents are similarly burdened, particularly given the "social stigma attached to bullying" (Boucaut, 2003, p. 151). While these studies assert an increase in workplace bullying behaviours, it remains unclear why the prevalence rates are escalating (Boucaut, 2003).

Research has revealed that workplace bullying is widely recognised as a significant workplace hazard (Boucaut, 2003). For example, a United States survey conducted in 2000 across the state population of Michigan revealed a workplace bullying prevalence rate of 21.5 % (Jagatic & Keashly, 2000). Additionally, Rayner's (1997) study in the United Kingdom found that over half the 1137 respondents taken from a convenience sampling frame had experienced workplace bullying, with the behaviour being integral to many employees. Hoel and Cooper's (2000) representative sample of 5,288 random employees reported that one in ten respondents had been bullied in the last six months and nearly a quarter experiencing the behaviour in the last five years.

Furthermore, an Australian-based prevalence study (Thomson, 1997) and more recent workplace bullying inquiry conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment (2012) found that face-to-face workplace bullying cost the nation's economy between $6 and $36 billion annually (Productivity Commission, 2010). Up to two million Australians per annum experience workplace aggression sometime during their careers (AHRC, 2011). However, these studies only concentrated on extreme forms of the behaviour such as overt and aggressive physical assaults and threats (Glomb & Liao, 2003), rather than the underreported (Boucaut, 2003), pervasive and insidious forms of workplace aggression, such as incivility and social isolation (Rogers & Kelloway, 1997).

Another inherent drawback to any method in measuring the prevalence of face-to-face workplace bullying has been a continued reliance on employees' recollections of events, most of which erode over time and are invariably influenced by the employees memory and changed perceptions (Lewis et al., 2008). However, if the aim is to assess the relationship between an employee's exposure to negative acts and their psychological wellbeing, then the target's subjective perception of the negative behaviours is appropriate in workplace bullying research (Einarsen et al., 2003; Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003). Agervold (2007) and Salin (2001) found that participants who were handed a workplace bullying definition rather than relying of their interpretation of past events, and then asked to report on the behaviour's frequency, provided invariably skewed survey responses. Conversely, studies adopting a more objective approach and asked participants to use and interpret a list of negative acts often found respondents reported a higher number of workplace bullying incidents (Lewis et al., 2008). Research studies that adopt both subjective and objective research approaches in measuring the prevalence of traditional workplace bullying may provide a more accurate account of workplace bullying (Salin, 2001), and could reasonably be applied in measuring the prevalence of negative workplace cyber communication. This process was applied in this research (Chapter 3: Research Design).

Irrespective of the undeniable existence of workplace bullying, current literature remains confused and ambivalent as to the key elements behind why, and how, these behaviours manifest, and also why some consequences are worse in some situations than others (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996). In this regard, research found up

to 90% of employees working in hierarchical structures experience higher levels of bullying from supervisors, while other studies indicate that colleagues, subordinates and even clients may act as the key perpetrators (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Rayner, 1997).

2.5.3 Measurement challenges | Face-to-face workplace bullying

Researchers investigating traditional face-to-face workplace bullying have been observed using a variety of designs including different measurement methods and sampling techniques, and cultures, all of which contribute to variations in workplace bullying prevalence rates (Nielsen, Matthiesen, & Einarsen, 2010).

Firstly, when designing workplace bullying studies, researchers often use different terminology to describe the phenomenon to their participants thus eliciting different prevalence response rates. Indeed, lower workplace face-to-face bullying prevalence rates are achieved if the study provides a clear definition to participants who self-label as targets (Nielson et al., 2010; Nocentini et al., 2010), while higher prevalence rates can be achieved if the respondents are guided by their own interpretation of the behaviour. Terminology, and the use of different terminology in different contexts, can influence perceptions and outcome (Nocentini et al., 2010). Table 2.1 (p. 48) illustrates the different terminologies used to described traditional forms of workplace face-to-face bullying and how more or less emotive language can influence how behaviour is perceived. For example, "workplace incivility" is term used to explain behaviour that is considered relatively low on the violence continuum (Einarsen, 1999; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Mayhew, 2007; Rogers & Kelloway, 1997; Weatherbee, & Kelloway, 2006). Workplace incivility is therefore subjectively perceived as less hostile behaviour than "workplace victimisation" (Hogh et al., 2011; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012) or "mobbing" (Einarsen et al., 2011; Leymann, 1996; Hogh et al., 2011). Table 2.1 was developed as a "mind map" for the researcher to identify the terms in workplace bullying research, and is thus provides an example, rather than exhaustive, list of references.

Table 2.1.

Face-to-face traditional workplace bullying terminology

Term	Examples of references
Mobbing	Einarsen et al., 2011; Leyman, 1996; Hogh, Mikkelesen, & Hansen, 2011
Workplace bullying or bullying	Einarsen, 1999; Cowie, Naylor, Rivers, Smith & Pereina, 2002; Coyne, Chomg, Seigne & Randle, 2003; Hoel, Einersen & Cooper, 2003; Einarsen et al., 2011; Ferris, 2004; Neidle, 1996; Rayner, 1999; Zapf & Goss, 2001
Workplace victimisation	Leymann, 1996; Lutgen-Sandvick & Tracey, 2012; Hogh et al., 2011; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012
Workplace incivility	Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Einarsen, 1999; Lim, Cortina & Magley, 2008; Mantell, 1994; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Mayhew, 2007; Rogers & Kelloway, 1997; Weatherbee, & Kelloway, 2006; Zhang & Leidner, 2014
Workplace or occupational violence	Hockley, 2002; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Mayhew, 2007; McCarthy, Mayhew, Barker & Sheehan, 2003; Rogers & Kelloway, 1997; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006; Zapf & Gross, 2001
Hostile workplace behaviour	Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell, & Salem, 2006; Salin, 2001; Zhang & Leidner (2014).
Emotional abuse	Keashly, 1998
Victimisation and harassment	Einarsen & Rakens, 1997; Liefooghe & Mackenzie-Davey, 2001; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2005
Psychological harassment	Einarsen et al., 2011; Hoel & Beale, 2006; Leymann, 1996; Salin, 2010

Source of data: Adapted from the sources listed above.

As shown in Table 2.1, the term workplace bullying is associated with organisationally negative language (Vartia, 2001), while the behaviour itself impacts on an employee's career, reputation, job performance and more (Olweus, 1993). Secondly, the convenience sampling frame usually used by workplace bullying researchers is generally based upon participants who self-assess as targets and thus recognise aggressive work-based behaviour as bullying (Einarsen et al., 2003; Leymann, 1992; Lutgen-Sandvick, Tracey, & Alberts, 2007). Perhaps understandably, it is less likely for workplace bullying research to gain access to

perpetrators, given most individuals are unlikely to self-assess as bullies (Cowie et al., 2002; Magley, Hulin, Fitzgerald, & DeNardo, 1999).

Thirdly, the type of data collection instrument often created different prevalence variables. The three most widely used are the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R), Workplace Aggression Research Questionnaire, and Leymann Inventory of Psychological Terror (LIPT). The 22-item NAQ-R instrument (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009) represents a behavioural inventory of negative behaviours across task-related, person-related and physical intimidation. The second most widely used data collection instrument is Harvey and Keashly's (2003) Workplace Aggression Research Questionnaire include a behavioural inventory of workplace aggression behaviours. The third and last instrument is Lehmann's (1990) LIPT regards a behavioural inventory of workplace psychological hostile behaviours. Yet each instrument provides different operational criteria and workplace bullying definitions that may or may not align with the participants' recollections (Nielsen et al., 2010).

Sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.3 discussed the measurement challenges and prevalence of traditional face-to-face workplace bullying. The upcoming sections, 2.5.4 and 2.5.5, consider these issues within the context of workplace cyberbullying.

2.5.4 Prevalence | Workplace cyberbullying

In comparison to the plethora of literature and research on traditional face-to-face workplace bullying and harassment, relatively little research has been carried out the prevalence on negative workplace cyber communication - cyberbullying. However, some work has been conducted into workplace cyberbullying prevalence rates. These studies indicate that somewhere between 9% (Baruch 2005; Ford 2013), 10.7% (Privitera & Campbell, 2009), 17% (Smith, 2007) and 20% (Pitch, 2007) of employees from a variety of workplaces reported observing or experiencing some form of cyberbullying at work. Against this backdrop, Weatherbee and Kelloway (2006) suggest that studies into this reasonably new employee cyber communication construct may be somewhat reliant on past multi-disciplinary research into organisational bullying to explain the new phenomenon, despite the inherent conceptual gaps and overlaps limiting those studies (Weatherbee, 2010).

In this regard, Lim and Teo (2009) used offline incivility research (Lim et al., 2008) to investigate online incivility, and found that employees' feelings of negative workplace event/s impacts their perceptions of workplace stress levels, attitudes and behaviour (Coyne et al., In press). Suler's research (2004) found cyber communication created a detached relationship between users that, due to the potential for anonymity, allowed perpetrators to avoid social sanctions (Willard, 2007) and develop unethical, toxic online behaviour that breached social boundaries otherwise observed during face-to-face interaction. Other research (Vance & Siponen, 2010; Zhang & Leidner, 2014) considered the process by which adult cyberbullies "naturalised" their toxic online behaviour to justify unsocial workplace behaviour. Research by Coyne et al. (In press) found a significant relationship between cyberbullying, mental strain and job dissatisfaction and represented a "serious workplace problem in terms of individual and organizational impact" (p. 27). D'Cruz and Noronha (2013) study of India's IT and ITES-BPO sector reported that employees felt "haunted" by cyberbullying and perceived the workplace construct as "boundaryless", while UK research found significant links between cyberbullying, ill health and job dissatisfaction attributed to trainee doctors (Farley et al., 2015).

2.5.5 Measurement challenges | Workplace cyberbullying

Given the potential harm associated with workplace cyberbullying, it is unfortunate the challenges facing cyberbullying researchers are so broad. In this regard, main challenges to workplace cyberbullying research include:

- Frequently changing and adoption of new technologies into the workforce, such as the recent adoption and usage of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, blogs) in public sector organisations (APSC, 2013b, 2013c); section 1.2.1 Australian public sector provides more detail on government cyber technologies) (Straub & Watson, 2001; Sussman & Sproull, 1999; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006).
- Lack of a definitive workplace cyberbullying measures (Farley et al., 2013) and therefore no ability to compare studies (Coyne et al., In press).
- Due to the recent nature of the phenomenon, the theoretical foundation is reasonably undefined and different research designs

creates challenges for researchers who wish to compare findings (Paternoster & Simpson, 1996; Suler, 2004; Willard, 2007; Zhang & Leidner, 2014) (section 2.8 Theoretical model provides detail on workplace cyberbullying theories).

- Paucity of research into workplace cyberbullying and reliance on the more extensive studies in juvenile/youth cyberbullying by which to compare findings (Nielson et al., 2010) (section 2.3 Online bullying or cyberbullying provides examples of workplace cyberbullying and youth research).

In further discussing the points above, the "extremely rapid rates of adoption and the widespread organizational use of ICTs have in many ways outstripped our ability to effectively research and understand their impacts" (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006, p. 449). This is particularly the case when CMCs are used as management tools across Australian workplaces, as this alters the face of organisationally-based communication processes (Straub & Watson, 2001), but is potentially outstripping researchers' ability to rigorously investigate, analyse and test the phenomena in a timely manner (Sussman & Sproull, 1999). In the past five years, the same mobile internet-based cyber communication technologies can now connect people as private citizens and families, and provide the foundation for modern work processes (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006).

The lack of a definitive workplace cyberbullying instrument also creates difficulties for researchers in this field (Coyne et al., In press; Farley et al., 2015). Researchers designing workplace cyberbullying studies are influenced by the type of survey used, the type of theory used to interpret the data, and collection method. While many youth based cyberbullying measures are available, tools that are designed to specifically measure adult-based workplace cyberbullying have yet to be developed (Farley et al., 2013). For example, Hinduja and Patchin (2006) developed the Cyberbullying and Online Aggression Survey to collect schoolyard and youth cyberbullying, while workplace cyberbullying studies (Privitera & Campbell, 2009; Coyne et al., In press) tend to use modified version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire – Revised (NAQ-R) (Einarsen et al., 2009).

Designing a workplace cyberbullying survey using the emotive language listed in section 2.3.4 can also influence participants' perceptions, and lead to reports of

high prevalence rates (Nielson et al., 2010). The use of less emotive language together with a set time measure by which to study exposure (e.g., participants' exposure to the behaviour over three or six months, or two or three times a week) may provide more accurate prevalence estimates. Furthermore, the paucity of workplace cyberbullying data means that there are no current valid baselines against which to compare the prevalence rates and consequences, even though each new study may contribute to the field (Nielson et al., 2010). Given the effects of workplace cyberbullying are often deemed more intense than traditional bullying due to the technologies' capability to mass broadcast anywhere, anytime, 24/7, and potentially impact employees' reputation and career opportunities (Giumetti et al., 2012), the researcher believes that this type of organisational harassment may be relevant within the context of other organisational aggression studies.

2.6 RATIONALE | HYPOTHESIS 1 (RQ1)

In light of the impact of workplace cyberbullying on employees at the individual, group, and organisational level (Giumetti et al., 2012), it is critical that further research be conducted to form a better understanding of the prevalence and consequences of this workplace phenomenon within a public sector context to clarify the human, organisational and national economic costs. Consequently, Hypothesis 1 examined Australian public sector employees' perceptions regarding the manifestation of workplace cyberbullying in government organisations:

- Hypothesis 1: Public servants perceive cyberbullying as manifesting in their workplaces**.**

This hypothesis stemmed from RQ1:

- How do Australian public sector employees perceive cyberbullying as manifesting within Australian public sector work environments? (prevalence).

The researcher believes this hypothesis will confirm that public servants perceive the manifestation of workplace cyberbullying in their agencies. This belief has been shaped by a number of considerations, including the researcher's personal observations across two public services as to the impact of cyber technologies in changing organisational behaviour. Indeed, Australia's business community has articulated a view that cyber technologies are not only changing the way work is

being done through “mass connectivity” and a need to constantly adapt, but is also changing traditional views around how the social contract between government and its citizens is defined (Livingstone, 2015). Australian public servants are tasked with administering and managing government policies and programs (APSC, 2013c, 2014b). Government employees are working with other Australian workers to adapt to changing cyber technologies and expectations, and are using new cyber technologies in innovative work environments (i.e., moving from face-to-face client interactions to cyber interactions interactions) (APSC, 2014a). In this context, government employees are potentially at risk of workplace cyberbullying due to disenfranchised, unhappy internal and external clientele.

2.7 CONSEQUENCES | TRADITIONAL WORKPLACE BULLYING AND WORKPLACE CYBERBULLYING

To summarise, sections 2.2 (face-to-face or offline bullying), 2.3 (online bullying or cyberbullying), 2.4 (similarities and differences between offline and online bullying), and 2.5 (prevalence rates and measurement challenges of offline and online bullying) introduced the definitions, and conceptual similarities and differences, of both constructs. These sections also identified key measurement issues affecting workplace offline and online bullying studies. In using this information, section 2.6 provided the rationale underpinning the first hypothesis and RQ1. Section 2.7 therefore relates to the impact of offline and online workplace bullying and considers both phenomena within the context of employee and organisational-related outcomes.

2.7.1 Face-to-face or offline workplace bullying

Over the past two decades trade unions, organisations and human resource areas have become increasingly aware of the consequences of negative workplace behaviours on both organisations and employees (Cowie et al., 2002). Consequently, a number of European countries and Canada monitor psychosocial risk and protective factors, including individual health outcomes such as workplace stress, and organisational outcomes such as absenteeism, presenteeism, staff turnover, loss in productivity loss (Dollard, 2006). This claim was further highlighted by studies indicating Occupational Health and Safety inspectors find work-based psychosocial issues more difficult to address since bullying cases tend to be emotive, complex and are difficult to prove (Johnston et al., 2011). For example, some of the consequences

of offline, face-to-face workplace bullying have been characterised (or masked) by people changing jobs or agencies rather than filing workplace incident reports (Rayner, 1997).

Agencies that continuously restructure and/or downsize find that employees are more likely to feel anxious about retaining their jobs and thus less likely to report workplace bullying for fear of losing their job (Crawford, 2001). A work environment in constant flux is also more likely to form sub-group cultures that tolerate or support bullying, and recipients of ongoing workplace bullying may respond with unscheduled leave, known as sick leave, to recover from this behaviour (de Jonge et al., 2004; Einarsen et al., 2003). Organisation culture can determine whether the behaviour occurs (Crawford, 2001) and whether employees feel safe to report the incident/s without fear of reprisal, thereby resulting in increased (less fear of reprisal) or decreased (heightened fear of reprisal) levels of workplace bulling incident reports. These issues, including how face-to-face workplace bullying and cyberbullying is reported, relates to how aggressive behaviours are managed by organisations.

Face-to-face bullying | Employee-related and organisationally-related impacts

Traditional face-to-face workplace bullying, and its associated issues of employee retention/attrition, productivity, and organisational reputation, is particularly relevant within the current financially constrained environment (Kieseker & Marchant, 1999). As observed by Weatherbee and Kelloway (2006), corporate and even government organisational reputations and financial health are often linked to public/stakeholders' confidence, which can be eroded if an embarrassing employee messages are illegally broadcast via the internet and impact, for example, company stock prices. There is a growing realisation that Australian organisations cannot afford to this level of unproductivity (House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Education and Employment, 2012).

Recent claims that both the targets and observers of traditional workplace bullying also experience mental and physical health issues are perhaps unsurprising (Hoel et al., 2004). Current literature is now emphasising the extreme effort made by targets who attempt to function at work while simultaneously dealing with the handicap of being bullied, notwithstanding the physical, emotional and behavioural stress resulting in poor health and decreased well-being (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012).

Such commonly reported psychological and physical consequences include anxiety and nervousness, decreased self-confidence and self-esteem, insomnia, chronic fatigue and various somatic problems, self-hatred, anger, depression, insecurity, suspicion, bitterness, concentration difficulties, and suicidal thoughts (Hogh et al., 2011). Research also found ongoing frequency of workplace bullying impacts a target's self-confidence and physical/emotional well-being (Frone, 2000; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Monks et al., 2009). If left uncontrolled, the target is likely to withdraw from the workplace through unexplained absenteeism or "sick-leave" (Comcare, 2014b; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002; Zapf et al., 1996). According to D'Cruz and Noronha (2010a, 2010b), recipients of traditional workplace bullying generally struggle to apply successful problem-solving mechanisms and strategies to mitigate or resolve the treatment. If allowed to progress without intervention, during the final or "expulsion phase" the target is labelled as a whinger, troublemaker or underperformer (Leymann, 1990; 1996; Lutgen-Sandvick & Tracey, 2012). This labelling process justifies the departure process, which is conducted under the heading of voluntary redundancy, retirement, official underperformance processes, medically approved sick-leave, voluntary transfer, and in extreme cases, suicide (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2002). Studies conducted from the early 1990s found that repeated negative workplace behaviours resulted in employees reporting low levels of well-being (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Hoel, Faragher, & Cooper, 2004; Tepper, 2000).

Hoel et al., (2004) "found that behaviours which were perceived to be aimed at the person or individual (attacking the private person) were most strongly and consistently correlated with negative health outcomes" (p. 368). Health outcomes included clinical depression, psychosomatic complaints, anxiety, and symptoms similar to those identified with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PSTD) (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Tehrani, 2004). Recent medical studies have now linked ongoing unfair or unjust treatment with coronary heart disease (Kivimäki et al., 2005) and is particularly evident in cases of enduring, unresolved and repeated hostile behaviours (Moayed, Daraiseh, Shell, & Salem, 2006). These medical studies have established that ongoing or chronic stress, such as the target's perception of stress resulting from bullying, causes the body to continuously release the hormone cortisol (the body's flight or fight hormone) into the blood (Bellelli, Pezzini, Bianchetti, Trabucchi,

2002). This research found that extensive exposure to stress together with the continuous high cortisol levels may temporarily reduce cognitive abilities (work performance), increase blood pressure, development of abdominal fat and metabolic syndrome/bad cholesterol (precursors of stroke or heart attacks) and lower immunity and inflammatory responses (other health issues such as ongoing colds) (Bellelli et al., 2002; Walkdstein & Katzel, 2005). The implications of this particular research on employees productivity within the context of negative workplace cyber communication have yet to be studied. Affected workplace cultures are often characterised by employees withdrawing from the environment, and manifest behaviours such as absenteeism (Kivimäki et al., 2000). Other behaviours include employee presenteeism, which is defined as reduced productivity whilst sick at work (Dollard, 2006), or attendance by conscious non-participants (Econtech, 2007, 2008), and increased staff turnover (Dollard, 2006; Sheehan et al., 2001).

In 2009, the World Health Organisation reported that work-related stress, psychological injury and fatigue were only some of the consequences of workplace bullying (Australian Productivity Commission, 2010). According to Kern and Grandey (2009), "frequent incivility from customers is a noted social stressor linked with job burnout" (p. 46). Within this context, it seems hardly surprising that deteriorating mental and physical health can result in underperformance at work (Tuckey, Dollar, Hosking, & Winefield, 2009), and result in an organisation's diminished overall effectiveness (Coyne, Craig, & Chong, 2004).

2.7.2 Workplace cyberbullying or online bullying

In the 1960s Marshall McLuhan said, "We shape our tools, and later, our tools shape us" (Eivazi, 2001). During the past ten years or so, the cyber-phenomenon has gradually moved into the workplace, and CMCs are now rapidly transforming our lives (Walther, 2011). This is particularly the case for younger generations born from the mid-1980s onwards who are now entering the workforce with naturalised cyber behaviours modelled from school (Monks & Coyne, 2011).

The introduction of mobile technologies has both enabled humans to globally connect via "mass connectivity" (Livingstone, 2015), and for workplace bullies to harass their targets anytime and anywhere (Lowry & Moskos, 2005). Lowry and Moskos (2005) suggests that this constantly adapting work environment with its instant connectivity may be a long-term hazard to employee health and productivity.

Certainly, the Australian business community is aware of that the need to constantly adapt has the potential to outstrip our existing workforce capabilities (Livingstone, 2015). However, at this stage is currently unknown whether the targets and observers of workplace cyberbullying develop stress-like symptoms or PSTD (Borstorff et al., 2007), although early indications suggest cyberbullying is linked to mental strain and job dissatisfaction (Farley et al., 2015).

Workplace cyberbullying | Employee-related consequences

Research by Borstorff et al. (2007) and others indicates that mobile workplace cyber technologies prevent employees from being able to easily disengage from work during family and holiday periods, thereby increasing the potential for increased stress, fatigue and irritability (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005). These cyber-fatigue signs were also found from a youth psychological welfare report, which subscribed schoolyard cyberbullying to decreased concentration and academic achievement, where study participants described feeling angry, anxious, embarrassed, crying, and blaming themselves (Beran & Li, 2005). Collectively, these findings suggest the concerns regarding the effects of cyberbullying may be well-founded and warrant further investigation not only in the schoolyard (Ramirez, Eastin, Chakroff, & Cicchirillo, 2008), but also across Australian workplaces and organisations.

While research has established the adverse impact of traditional workplace bullying on employees' motivation, health and performance (Cortina et al., 2001; Lim & Cortina, 2005), research is still determining the exact impact of cyberbullying on employees. Given this, one recent and ground breaking international study has identified significant links between cyberbullying, ill health and job dissatisfaction (Farley et al., 2015). While the details are ostensibly unclear, the potential consequences of this new workplace behaviour on Australian employees prompted the AHRC (2012) into declaring cyberbullying as a crucial factor in creating difficult and unsafe organisational environments. Within this context, some research has found that employee presenteeism (employees misusing or wasting time while at work), is manifesting as cyber behaviour (Weatherbee, 2010).

Instead of taking a "sickie", employees zone out and waste time by cyberslacking, cyberloafing or cyberbludging and use work cyber technologies to communicate with, and sometimes harass, other employees (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). Within this context, Giumetti et al., (2012) found that this online

workplace behaviour exponentially escalates when senior staff, who represent organisational hierarchical and positional power, are perceived as fostering a discourteous and aggressive workplace culture. Furthermore, a loss of professional reputation can influence the employee's health and job performance (Leymann, 1996), erode performance and lead to fewer career prospects, culminating in a job loss that affects the target's financial security and that of their dependents (Björkqvist, 2001).

Workplace cyberbullying | Organisationally-related consequences

Negative workplace cyber communications, either in the form of cyber incivility, aggression or bullying impacts on both a micro and macro level: micro - individuals involved (perpetrator and target/s) and observers (teams, groups, branches); and, macro - across organisational boundaries (stakeholders, clients, customers) (Alonzo & Aiken, 2002). Indeed, research conducted by Alonzo and Aiken (2002) found that the micro elements, such as disenfranchised or bullying external employees, agencies, clients, customers and stakeholders, can affect whole-of-organisation macro outcomes by injecting ad hoc negative cyber behaviours into and across the organisation.

UK organisational research conducted by Baruch (2005) found that the cyber platform used to bullying the target generally made no difference in regards to the target's perception of the experience, and that being bullied through a workplace cyber platform, such as email, generally resulted in similar adverse personal experiences that then resulted in organisational consequences. For example, Baruch (2005) found that employees' perceptions of job dissatisfaction, lowered job performance were linked organisational consequences. In these cases, organisations reported higher rates of employees reporting their intention to leave and thus increasing the financial pressure on the organisation to recruit and retrain replacements. These consequences were observed irrespective of the mode of work cyber platform involved.

Workplace cyberbullying has been found to result in increased levels of employee-related frustration, anger, and reflected responses, the organisation-wide "incivility spiral" (Anderson & Pearson, 1999). This has led to less effective task management and timely decision-making processes and reduced organisational performance and effectiveness (Martin, Hiesel, & Valencic, 2001). Therefore, there

appears to potential a link between employee-related cyberbullying outcomes, such as increased psychological (fear) and physical illness, and whole-of-organisation consequences, including absenteeism and attrition rates (Giumetti et al., 2012) that are suffered by the spectrum of target/s, observers (Rogers & Kelloway, 1997) and organisations.

However, while the amount of research on the workplace cyberbullying on Australian organisations is currently very small (Privitera & Campbell, 2009), there are implied signs that the behaviour is growing fast and that the Australian labour force is at risk of this new cyber workplace phenomenon. For example, this risk to Australian workplaces and organisations has been implied by a Federal Court of Australia case (*Poniatowska v Hickinbotham Homes*, FMC, 2009). This case found guilty two employees who repeatedly texting and emailing inappropriate messages to a fellow employee, who consequently developed a mental illness, which later transformed into anxiety and depression and cost the organisation in terms of expensive psychological injury claims.

At this stage, workplace legislation and associated organisational policies governing employee behaviour across Australian public sector organisations are in the nascent process of defining and articulating workplace cyberbullying (as indicated in Section 1.2.1 Australian public sector). To date, there is little evidence as to the prevalence of workplace cyberbullying within government organisations, or the consequences of this phenomenon on employees' work performance, job satisfaction or health within government agencies. Given this substantial literature gap, this research aims to determine whether this construct is occurring within the Australian public sector context, whether public servants perceive this behaviour as prevalent within their work environment, and their perceptions as to the impact on their work performance, stress, job satisfaction and rating.

2.8 RATIONALE | HYPOTHESES 2, 3 AND 4 (RQ2)

Hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 are all aimed at identifying whether government employees perceive workplace cyberbullying as impacting workplace stress levels, job satisfaction and work performance. Given Australian public sector employees represent 16% of this nation's workforce (ABS, 2014a, 2014b), the potential impact of workplace cyberbullying is potentially critical in terms individual and

organisational performance, and signifies an enduring (and unsustainable) cost to our economy (AHRC, 2013; Martin et al., 2001). Consequently, hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 investigate Australian public sector employees' perceptions regarding the consequences of workplace cyberbullying:

- Hypothesis 2: Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as correlated with increased levels of workplace stress (consequences).
- Hypothesis 3: Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as correlated with decreased overall work performance (consequences).
- Hypothesis 4: Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as correlated with decreased feelings of job satisfaction (consequences).

Hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 pertain to the RQ2:

- How do Australian public sector employees perceive workplace cyberbullying as affecting their workplace stress, job satisfaction, work performance, and organisational culture? (consequences).

The researcher proposes the notion that, given the substantial evidence indicating employees' high stress levels, low work performance and job dissatisfaction are associated with traditional face-to-face workplace bullying (Hoel et al., 2004; Nielsen & Einarsen), then the same would be true for workplace cyberbullying. These three hypotheses are therefore aimed at further understanding the impact workplace cyberbullying on workplace stress levels, job performance and satisfaction. This is particularly relevant given stress related research into traditional face-to-face incivility and bullying is linked to employee job burnout and work performance issues (Kern & Grandey, 2009). Traditional workplace bullying research found the behaviour adversely impacted employees' motivation, health and performance (Cortina et al., 2001; Lim & Cortina, 2005). Within this context, the workplace cyberbullying has greater potential for being damaging to employees. Therefore, the researcher contends that technology's ability to enhance employees' accessibility develops greater potential for workplace cyberbullying to be:

(a) unremitting, in that the cyber aggressor can infect the target's work and home/family life and is therefore potentially inescapable,

(b) is easily and immediately broadcast across agencies and globally, and in public forums, and thus affect individual reputations and careers, and

(c) enables colleagues or supervisors, and external clients, to overtly or covertly (anonymously) bully the target without compunction.

2.9 ANTECEDENTS

To summarise the above sections on traditional workplace bullying, cyberbullying and workplace cyberbullying, a number of social and human psychology models quantify organisational aggression (Coovert & Thompson, 2003). Organisational aggression is sometimes deemed an "organisational problem" (Boucaut, 2001, p. 72) that continues lacks definitive theoretical foundations to explain it and its consequences (Boucaut, 2001). In this regard, this section considers organisational offline and online culture, conflict and public sector culture within the context of organisational aggression including online and offline bullying. Further explanation in this regard is provided in the subsections below entitled (a) what are organisations? (c) organisational culture, (e) outdated governance frameworks, (f) organisational offline culture, (g) organisational online culture, (h) public sector culture (i) Rationale: Hypothesis 5, and (j) face-to-face workplace bullying and cyberbullying – practical implications.

2.9.1 What are organisations?

This section examines the nomenclature of online and offline aggression, harassment, and offline and online workplace bullying within the context of organisational influences. Examination of negative workplace human behaviours within an organisational construct is particularly helpful within the context of this research. In this regard, better understanding how organisations work will lead to enhanced clarity as to why and how workplace cyberbullying bullying is manifesting within public sector organisations around Australia.

Firstly, it is important to stress that rules-based, institutional and hierarchical organisations (Lutgen-Sandvick & Tracey, 2012), including those found within the Australian public sector (APSC, 2013c, 2014b), are generally represented by tiered, hierarchical structures. Within this context, the elements attributed to traditional workplace face-to-face bullying generally include a consideration of:

- the behavioural patterns between management and staff,

- relationship and power constructs between the perpetrator and target within the organisation's social construct or hierarchy,
- the perpetrator's organisationally accepted modus operandi,
- escalation of the violence continuum linked from the repetitiveness (or frequency) of the behaviour with the time during which the behaviour is experienced by the target, and
- accepted levels of aggressive behaviours modelled within the leadership ranks, and general low quality of leadership (Ertureten, Cemalcilar, & Aycan, 2013).

These points are discussed in detail within the ensuing subsections, and within the context of past organisational and human social psychological research (Bennett & Robinson, 2003; Graumann, 1998; Levine & Hogg, 2010; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006), and provide evidence to negative workplace cyber communication.

2.9.2 Organisational culture

According to literature, workplace culture is "widely regarded as a construct denoting the extent to which members share core organizational values" (Vardi & Wiener, 1996, p. 160). Culture has also been viewed as a barrier to resolving face-to-face workplace bullying, where organisations characterised by a hierarchical structure and management style may be unaware that their culture is a bullying one (Boucaut, 2003). In this sense, culture is perceived as an enabling tool that can be used or abused by powerful organisational groups, such as the executive or middle management, to shape the values, attitudes and behaviours of other less powerful organisational members. In large organisations, culture is expressed through explicit and implicit rules.

Explicit rules, such as a code of conduct or code of ethics, (e.g., (s.13 of the *Public Service Act 1999*) are expressed through legislation, policies, procedures, frameworks and expressed or operationalised via the organisation's governance processes (i.e., the participatory, or exclusionary, processes and actions organisations conduct when making and implementing decisions). In this regard, the Australian public sector's explicit culture is reflected by State, Territory and Commonwealth legislation (APSC, 2013c, 2014b; Peters, 2004). Implicit rules exist along-side explicit rules, and represent an organisation's culture by reflecting the "way we do

things around here" (Boucaut, 2001, 2003; Crawford, 2001). For example, an unspoken and implicit rule could be that "we are proud of our "can do" culture so we put up with workplace bullying behaviour"; such implicit values can reduce or even undermine the impact of explicit non-bullying legislation and policies. Organisational culture may therefore "constitute an important normative influence on the inclination of members to engage in acts of misbehaviour" and "relates the organizational culture variable to unethical decision behaviour of managers" (Vardi & Wiener, 1996, p. 160).

Coovert and Thompson (2003) found that the influx of new CMC capabilities are resulting in modified organisational culture and job expectations, particularly rules regarding online people management (also known as virtual team-management), and resulting in less conventional organisational online and offline behaviour. This less conventional cyber behaviour is generally exemplified through the ways by which ministers, executive, middle-management and staff can now directly communicate with one another (APSC, 2013c, 2014a, 2014b). Further studies suggest that CMCs capacity for impersonal and fast interactions is reducing work task response times thus increasing workplace stress, while its inability to always convey positional or nuanced social cues is subtly changing implicit professional conventions around access (Sproull, 1994). These matters are particularly relevant within the framework of this thesis and how these fundamental human behaviours are transposed across online workplace platforms and influence the work conditions currently experienced by Australian public servants.

Understanding these human social triggers within an organisational paradigm provides a solid foundation for this research into workplace cyberbullying within rules-based institutionalised organisations such as Australian Public Sector. Therefore, the section below firstly examined these constructs by explaining the expression of human aggression and bullying within organisational settings using human behavioural theories including social psychology as a lens for Walther's (1992, 1996) *Social Information Processing* (SIP) *Theory*. These are then mapped to organisation challenges such as culture, change, and conflict and how these influence work-based human-to-human cyber communications and cyberbullying. This process assisted the researcher to investigate, compare and contrast the similarities and differences between traditional organisational bullying to make a more informed

literature review into the less known and researched antecedents of workplace cyberbullying.

Organisations legitimising aggressive behaviours

In considering workplace bullying, the relationship between the perpetrator and target is influenced by the organisation's legitimisation of the perpetrator's actions (Lutgen-Sandvick & Tracey, 2012). In this sense, those in senior hierarchical positions are more likely to bully staff in junior positions. Björkqvist (1994) describes systemic bullying within hierarchical organisations as a quasi-parasitical relationship. In such instances, the aggressor is organisationally entitled to direct negative behavioural patterns to a target who either displays victim-like responses, or risk being apostrophised as a "troublemaker" or "underperformer." (Leymann, 1990, 1996). In these cases, an organisation's human resources resolution processes can help to escalate the bullying process by siding with the hierarchically powerful group of perpetrators and/or ineffectively supporting the target by (for instance) offering biased mediation processes that effectively disciplines the victim or makes them accountable for the perpetrator's behaviour (Lutgen-Sandvick & Tracey, 2012).

Organisational conflict: Personality triggers

A body of literature sees traditional workplace bullying within hierarchically-structured organisations enacted by conscientious, literal-minded, somewhat naive overachievers (Brodsky, 1976). These overachievers often possess an innately unrealistic view of themselves and the work situation, whereas bullies often score high in perceptions of emotional intelligence, self-entitlement and self-confidence, and demonstrate aggressive reactions in different social situations. Although personality factors may not justify organisationally–based predatory bullying, research indicates that in some cases the introverted, shy, submissive, anxious, sensitive, and conscientious temperaments trigger the overt or passively aggressive predatory personalities who often demonstrate manipulative Machiavellian social skills and lack empathy (Rigby, 2002). Medical research into participants displaying these personality traits sometimes described the individuals as exhibiting psychopathic behaviour that manifested as workplace bullying (Jordan & Sheehan, 2000; Moayed et al., 2006; Tuckey et al., 2009).

These human social constructs have been developed to understand and define the triggers that ostensibly instigate these behaviours (Seigne, Coyne, Randall, &

Parker, 2007). Within an organisational context, these negative behaviours are viewed as either individual human-to-human (sometimes described as personality driven), or work-related behaviours that are brought about by external factors (Einarsen et al., 2009; Leymann, 1990; Robbins, Millett, & Waters-Marsh, 2004; Zapf, 1999). In this regard, workplace bullying is described as a gradually evolving construct that originates as a consequence of some form of low level conflict, (Einarsen, 1999). It is generally attributed either to conflict arising within a paradigm expressed as perpetrators and targets (or victims) that are represented as individuals or groups (Einarsen et al., 2011), or as a consequence of organisational elements (Salin & Hoel, 2011). Einarsen et al., (2011) identified two forms of organisational bullying;

- predatory, being triggered by the bully's inadequacies, and
- dispute-related that arise as a consequence of differences and conflicts between participants.

Predatory bullying

Predatory organisational bullying often occurs without provocation and has been linked to the personality traits of both target and perpetrator (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007). The qualities evidenced by an aggressive predator personality may be further enhanced if an organisation's explicit culture, as articulated through ambiguous management policies, guidelines and cross-agency communications (Lutgen-Sandvik & Tracey, 2012) such as newsletters and meetings, fosters people with a sense of entitlement to behave as they please (Einarsen, 1999). In these cases the target's narrative is ignored or oppressed by personnel policies originally developed to resolve such matters.

Indeed, a small number of organisational studies describe corporate bullies as organisational psychopaths (Jordan & Sheehan, 2000; Moayed et al., 2006; Tuckey et al., 2009), a personality disorder epitomised by a lack of empathy, personal entitlement and results focus. According to these organisational studies, personal characteristics may also be exacerbated by the organisation's internal formal reporting structures, extreme workplace changes resulting in staff stress and uncertainty, and more. Psychopathic behaviour have been attributed to leaders, supervisors or managers unable to cope with the stresses of their position and role, yet may hold substantial organisational positional power and thus deem their

increasingly erratic behaviour as appropriate and permissible (Rayner, Hoel & Cooper, 2002).

Dispute-related bullying

In contrast, dispute-related bullying stems from interpersonal organisationally bound conflict that is allowed to escalate without intervention to reach a level of intensity, frequency and duration that it develops into bullying (Einarsen et al., 2003). This escalation process has also been described as a violence continuum (Einarsen, 1999; Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Mayhew, 2007; Rogers & Kelloway, 1997; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). In these instances the targets can be provocative victims who rarely possess general self-awareness skills to recognise that their own behaviours are exacerbating the conflict and are generally seen within the organisation as difficult or high-maintenance (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007). In extreme dispute cases, the quasi-parasitic relationship between the aggressor and target (Björkqvist, 1994) may result in the respective individuals perceiving the conflict as adding to their self-importance (Einarsen et al., 2003).

In these instances an organisation's anti-bullying policy of non-transparent workplace bullying processes (where affected individuals are "not allowed" to talk about the bullying), and aimed at protecting the targets, instead works in the bully's favour. In this regard, the artificial isolation allows the (in this instance) socially unaware bully, who self-perceives as the victim, to convey a more believable narrative in support to their claims of victimisation, while the enforced silence weakens the target's ability to defend themselves (Lutgen-Sandvick & Tracey, 2012). Indeed, workplace bullying research has found little evidence demonstrating that workplace anti-bullying policies alone reduce organisational bullying (Boucaut, 2001).

Group-against-group or group-against-individual

The last type of organisational bullying behaviour that is useful to consider within the context of this research into workplace cyberbullying in the Australian public sector is aggressive behaviour arising between individuals and/or groups (Zapf et al., 1999). According to Zapf et al. (1999), group-focused aggression and inter or intra-group bullying often results in the target/s becoming confused and even reproaching themselves for causing the situation. This type of self-censure constitutes a crucial component in the process, as the target's perception of the

bullying behaviour is a crucial factor influencing both mental and physical health. In the example of negative intergroup behaviours, these may be demonstrated during highly competitive situations, such as an Olympic sporting event, where the group's behaviour is actively rewarded by the organisation's leaders (Levin & Hogg, 2009). Group-level aggression generally occurs when the group's official or unofficial leaders collaborate against another group, or an individual who represents a group, with the objective of achieving a reward, additional resources or power.

In cases of inter and intra group anti-social behaviour and bullying, the resolution processes are often challenged by the number of employees involved in the incident/s, particularly given most bullying cases tend to involve many organisational participants, such as supportive perpetrators or observers (Namie & Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). Furthermore, literature indicates that when minority groups are viewed as "different" by key members of the agency, then these groups become more likely to be exposed to criticism (Einarsen, 1999). While positive team or group climates are characterised by collaboration and healthy competition between teams, negative climates tend to isolate individuals who have challenged the group's accepted behaviours or norms, subsequently resulting in conflict (Einarsen et al., 2003; Salin & Hoel, 2011). This type of social conflict quickly escalates when the target's internal value or belief system is such that their behaviour clearly diverges from those of the dominant group and workplace expectations, thereby increasing the target's victimisation and isolation (Leymann, 1996). The resulting group-against-individual conflict leads to targets removing themselves from the work environment, or may subjugate their values and participate in the group's bullying behaviours (Zapf & Gross, 2001).

In these cases an agency's Human Resource area may act as unwitting adherents to the bullying behaviour, particularly if language used within personnel policies actively points to the differences between the standard and minority groups (Comcare, 2012). Similar to the dispute-related bullying, unrestrained group-related workplace conflict can quickly escalate and has the potential to influence implicit behaviours and culture (Salin & Hoel, 2011). In extreme cases, the aggressive group-related behaviours become normalised and perceived as the accepted standard (Einarsen, 1999; Leymann, 1996; Zapf, 1999).

Given the nature of workplace cyber communications, together with its capacity to cross inter and intra organisational boundaries, it is perhaps unsurprising that workplace cyberbullying research has endorsed the notion that the cyber platform is simply another tool across which negative human behaviours are perpetrated (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). However, while this notion is inherently sound, it is based on the principles identified from research into traditional face-to-face bullying and does not account for CMCs easy access, enhanced potential for anonymity, mobility, 24/7 usage, and rapid mass public broadcast capabilities.

2.9.3 Outdated governance frameworks

Studies have proven that organisational hierarchical social strata can be structured to negatively impact individual employees (Levin & Hogg, 2009). Indeed, organisations may accidentally develop negative interpersonal or corporate behaviours as a consequence of outdated employee frameworks – policies, guidelines and practices, particularly during peak periods of change or growth where the changed working environment outpaces existing employee management policies (Robbins et al., 2004; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008). In this regard, considering workplace bullying as an organisational behaviour (Robins et al., 2004) must also account for the systems (generally enlivened through governance processes) within that working environment, and how these governance systems and processes support or undermine employees (Peters, 2004). Differences of opinion arise when considering the effectiveness of organisational anti-bullying control strategies. While research indicates operationalised organisational bullying may be moderated through increased worker control and support systems, including clear anti-bullying policies, education programs and strong follow-up action (de Jonge et al., 2004; Einarsen et al., 2003; Grogan & Dann, 2002; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007), this notion is only held when they are perceived by employees as fair, equitable and just. Furthermore, the general view is that the efficacy of these strategies is arbitrary and changeable, as these systems rely on the experience and credibility of the people who implement them (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Simons, 1999; White, 2000).

Furthermore, the value of these governance procedures invariably depends upon the reporting and mediation procedures inherent within the often contradictory requirements of procedural transparency/impartiality with staff confidentiality, all of which have been known to conflict with an individual's right to natural justice

(Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Simons, 1999; White, 2000). Independence and impartiality towards the perpetrator and target are critical during any investigation (Einarsen et al., 2003). When faced with natural justice (Dietz et al., 2003), where all parties have equal access to a fair and unbiased hearing, an organisation's corporate or Human Resource areas often face challenges particularly as their natural alignment with middle and top management undermines their impartiality (Noe et al., 2009).

Within the context of this research into workplace cyberbullying in Australian public sector organisations, Human Resource areas are generally perceived as being a crucial element in resolving workplace conflict (APSC, 2013b, 2013c; Comcare, 2012). Other research (Cortina et al., 2001; Di-Martina et al., 2005; Lim & Cortina, 2005) assert ambivalent procedures are often perceived as unjust, particularly if the target perceives that they have no proper access to natural justice. Indeed, this research indicates that in most cases the target is provided with an internal adjudicator to negotiate a resolution, however internal negotiators are more likely to side with the organisationally powerful individual, who is often likely to be the perpetrator.

Generally speaking, most targets do not have the level of confidence, legal background or financial support to instigate independent and impartial investigations to resolve the bullying, while Human Resource managers often struggle to offer targets with the neutrality required for natural justice due to their close work affiliations with management (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011). Einarsen et al. (2003) posited the notion that a key factor explaining why organisational management and leadership often struggled to acknowledge and thus better mitigate workplace bullying is due to obscure or obsolete governance frameworks. This notion has been recently supported by the workplace bullying report released by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment (2012), which noted a governance requirement upheld by public sector organisations for targets to undergo extensive medical examinations to substantiate their claims of the impact of workplace bullying on job performance. This report also observed that workplace bullying investigations are influenced by a combination of hearsay and evidence-based reporting systems, derive from often trivial overt (witnessed) and covert (unwitnessed) claims that are generally difficult if not impossible to irrevocably

prove and progress through to prosecution. Consequently, unclear or ambiguous governance processes that are used against the target, together with confusing grievance processes, can be detrimental for the target, especially when the perpetrator holds positional power and holds more scope to undermine their subordinate (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011).

Instituted governance frameworks that accidentally or deliberately uphold organisational injustice were also reported by Privitera and Campbell (2009), who found that the work environment, particularly operationalised power imbalances, can exacerbate the participant's distress. Alternatively, Parzefall and Salin (2010) posited the notion that employee perceptions of interactional injustice or unfairness, or operationalised unfair procedures (Cropanzano, Stein, & Nadisic, 2011) may act as a mediating effect between the behaviour and employees attitudes and perceptions. Considering these organisational issues, the debate continues as to the requisite period by which bullying behaviours become organisationally systemic and culturally accepted (Leymann, 1996). These debates consider a number of antecedents, such as the organisation's governance framework combined with the target's past childhood, family and work experiences, organisational position/role, gender, age and personal resilience, support network, personality and life stresses.

2.9.4 Organisational offline culture

Other antecedents often ascribed to aggressive offline behaviours include the level of accepted aggression within the organisation's culture. Salin and Hoel (2011) posit a number of operationally induced internal organisational antecedents. These antecedents encompass elements such as culture and climate, leadership, job design and description, and ongoing organisational change (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013). These elements also assist in establishing a bullying work-environment that is enacted between employees on an interpersonal and socio-relational level, or within an organisational context where the internal systems construct an "organisation-as-bully" paradigm (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013). Lutgen-Sandvik and Tracey (2012) assert the notion that the type of communication used between organisational individuals highlights the multiple social factors that constitute aggressive organisational cultures, and can clarify how aggressive social and cultural idiosyncrasies support a results outcomes work environment. Keashly and Harvey (2006) found that depersonalised, socio-structural paradigm, recognised through the

oppressive or poorly-designed and highly rules-based and institutionalised staff management governance processes, can deliberately or accidentally victimise employees (Einarsen et al., 2011; Liefooghe & Mackenzie-Davey, 2001). A further option, as posited by D'Cruz and Noronha (2013), suggest the coexistence of both the interpersonal, socio-relational with the impersonal, socio-structural paradigms to describe and understand organisationally aggressive cultures.

Other studies indicate that hierarchical workplace environments, such as the public sector, require employees to adhere to inconsistent explicit organisational policies, practices and guidelines (explicit culture), and implicit rules and expectations (implicit culture) (Boucaut, 2001; Robbins & Judge, 2007), thus creating the foundations for a dysfunctional work culture. The reasons behind how and why organisations develop negative or dysfunctional interpersonal and corporate cultures has been the subject of various experimental and observational studies conducted by social psychologists (Robbins et al., 2004). Robbins et al. (2004) suggested that employees, being social animals, emulate their leaders' social behavioural cues. Milgram (1974) explained that accepted organisational social conduct is often inspired, and legitimised by the behaviours expressed via the organisation's authority figures, or employees who have positional power, longevity or expertise.

When unethical behaviours are implicitly or explicitly condoned by an organisation's authority figures' leadership style, the more likely these behaviours and attitudes are modelled across the organisation (Ertureten et al., 2013; Robbins et al., 2004), particularly if these behaviours are rewarded with promotions. In this regard, evidence identified by the workplace bullying inquiry by the House Standing Committee on Education and Employment (2012) found that elements of the Australian public sector culture provide an additional bullying mechanism via the potential misuse of powers enshrined under the Public Service Regulations 1999 (2012). These powers allow employers to order staff to attend a fitness for duty mental health assessment, and if misused through over application, enable managers to intimidate employees who complain about workplace bullying. Furthermore, the misuse of workplace ICT communication technologies has been increasingly observed as potentially harmful for both private and public organisations both at the

capability-level (lost productivity) and interpersonal sense (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006).

Additional research asserts that high-performing employees tend to leave organisations that exhibit systemically inequitable human resource procedures and processes (culture) and overt levels of conflict and bullying (Einarsen et al., 2011). This research found that integrated organisational culture (explicit codes of conduct that match the implicit culture) help employees align with the establishment's goals and assist employees achieve greater performance levels. This suggests that employees who are clear about the agency's direction and vision, share the agency's values and behaviours, and possess a clear understanding about how they fit into, and contribute to, this vision have better employee retention and job satisfaction, lower unplanned absenteeism, and an overall improvement in performance.

Conversely, research consistently links systemised workplace conflict and other negative behaviours to individual and whole-of-organisation aggression (de Jonge et al., 2004; Einarsen et al., 2003). These studies indicate that bureaucratic hierarchies that are epitomised by vague or disingenuous anti-bullying human resource policies, and/or delayed or disjointed management mechanisms, are more prone to un-collegiate team/group sub-cultures within which bullies are empowered to harass their victims. Poorly articulated or administered employee management policies, practices and procedures can create a normalised working climate that systematically disempowers, humiliates, degrades and exploits employees (Einarsen et al., 2003; Rayner, 1997). Within organisational constructs, the efficacy of an organisation's governance structures is incredibly important when establishing healthy workplace cultures and behaviours (de Jonge et al., 2004).

Einarsen (1999) posited four distinct elements of systemised workplace aggression that occurs when organisational constructs, such as explicit culture and governance systems, are inefficacious. These are described within the context of the violence continuum that is expressed as low-level interpersonal workplace conflict, discomfort, and stigmatisation, that escalates into trauma or distress. Indeed, Zapf and Gross (2001) found workplace bullying cultures develop when a critical workplace internal change, incident or conflict, remain unresolved and uncontrolled, and allowed to develop into negative behaviour that focuses on marginalised individuals or groups. This violence continuum, expressed by Einarsen (1999), was

later enhanced by the *Demand – Control – Support Theory* espoused by Xanthopoulou et al., (2007). This theory propounded the view that cultures placing low importance on employee-based support or behavioural control can act as precursors to work conflict, stress and aggression. Tuckey et al., (2009), found that organisational cultures epitomised by stressful working conditions (such as high work demands with low job control and support) escalate employee stress levels and decrease team's anger-control and conflict thresholds. Low level anger and conflict that is allowed to continue without redress results in heightened anger, frustration, and tension, which then cascades throughout the organisation (this parallels' the violence continuum). Tensions can further intensify if the under-developed social skills of either the target or perpetrator result in inappropriate responses, for which the organisation has few or no management conflict resolution procedures (Jordan & Sheehan, 2000; Moayed et al., 2006).

Within this context, one study (Rayner, 1997) found that cultures exemplifying interpersonal workplace conflict behaviours are more likely to manifest when employees' professional or organisational status is threatened through organisational change, isolation, overwork or unclear/changing work goals. Destabilising organisation factors such as job ambiguity, time pressure, downsizing and restructuring, and culture and management style, are also factors (Dollard, 2003), although the exact mix of critical elements, intensity and sequencing is unclear. Additional research supports this theory and also posits that the combination of highly changeable organisational influences together with unpopular organisational practices or new decisions may be labelled as bullying by employees (Lewis et al., 2008).

In further considering the causal models of organisational cultures characterised by face-to-face bullying, additional research has suggested that a perpetrator's behavioural responses to external stimuli may be a learned response developed over time within a particular workplace context (Seigne et al., 2007). These responses are learned in rules-based, outcomes focused, "closed shop" and authoritative male-dominated work environments that instil people with a sense of entitlement linked to their position, and are thus viewed as "entitlement-based" organisations (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001). Such environments report higher incidents of culturally accepted role-based conflict together with increased employee

dissatisfaction with management's leadership behaviour and the organisation-at-large (Einarsen, Raknes, & Matthiesen, 1994). Studies found that, when participants are asked to rate the effect work conditions and culture have on the level of bullying, employees often provide a 10% variance (that is, work conditions and culture are 10% more likely to enhance the bullying); this percentage increases to 24% within studies involving multi-organisational studies and cultures (Einarsen et al., 1994).

Importantly, it seems clear that an organisation's culture, including accepted social behaviours and work conditions, are key factors in organisational aggression research. In this regard, organisational studies found that employees tend to use the term "bullying" to describe a wide range of apparently discordant organisational processes, none of which were traditionally associated with bullying behaviours (Lewis et al., 2008), thus indicating employees perceived bullying with a variety of

factors. Workplace conflict has also been attributed to industrial relations changes, such as the Work Choices legislation (Comcare, 2012). Comcare (2012) observed that these changes assisted in positively changing organisational cultures, as individual employees were offered improved salary packages and conditions as incentives to improve their work input. Other potential indicators of organisational bullying include cultures that accept or ignore inadequate staff resourcing practices, ignoring underperformance and implementation of sanctioned practices that suppress staff (Lewis et al., 2008).

2.9.5 Organisational online culture

Over the past two decades, contemporary Australian organisations have responded to and implemented numerous change programs including the introduction of technology based information and management systems to increase efficiency, effectiveness and capacity (Hales, 2002). However, the notion that change programs such as enhanced technologies, offer organisations both opportunities and drawbacks is a valid one. If managed well, first-order (known) and second-order (unintended) consequences of corporate technological change measures (Sproull & Kiesler, 1994) may correct inadequate internal policy and procedural inefficiencies (Simons, 1999; White, 2000). However, if implemented poorly, the planned (first-order) and unintended (second-order) outcomes may adversely impact organisational decision making and social networks, and result in incoherence and disrupted work environment (White, 2000) and escalate employees' frustration, resentment and

stress. Consequently, Sproull and Kesler (1986) attributed the outcome of newly introduced workplace cyber platforms (at that time the cyber platform was organisational email), as potentially developing new and unforeseen organisational social network. This research was extended by more recent studies into the influence of existing cyber technology to erode traditional lateral and vertical hierarchical structural, communication and social boundaries (Jarvenpaa, Shaw, & Staples, 2004), and capacity for "boundaryless" (D'Cruz & Naronha, 2013), or blurred, work and private lives (Coyne et al., In press; Giumetti et al., 2012).

In their research into the outcomes of an individual's trust in global virtual teams in different situations, Jarvenpaa et al., (2004) found workplace cyber technology fuelled "opportunistic behaviour" (p. 264), where technology (e.g., emails) were used to "virtually" assign arbitrary tasks onto affiliated and non-affiliated colleagues and workers across the organisation. Organisational employees socially interact with one another all the time through cyber platforms, such as work email, or websites (e.g., Facebook), and in doing so are often unaware of the social and cultural forces driving this interaction, such as organisational culture (White, 2000). These notions underpin the diversity of social interactions at the individual and group level, and illustrate why organisational behaviour is linked to social psychology and human psychology (Robbins et al., 2004).

Access to work-based communication technology, such as email and work-based networking websites, is prominent in formal and informal, internal and external, individual, group, inter and intra organisation communications (Acas, 2012). The recent influx of workplace mobile cyber platforms, such as smart phones and Tablets, lap-top computers) allow employees to be available and accessible to their supervisors and clients outside normal work hours (Porter & Kakabadse, 2006). This, however, does not explain the growth of abusive emails, where employees or supervisors distribute rude, harassing or bullying emails (Baruch, 2005; Carlson & Zmud, 1999; Muhl, 2003; Romm & Pliskin, 1997). Weatherbee and Kelloway (2006) suggest that the chronic pervasiveness of email aggression, together with face-to-face workplace bullying, indicates either (a) the new technologies are being used as a new tool to convey aggressive human communication, or (b) the cyber platforms' characteristics are developing new forms of aggressive workplace behaviour. So recent is this development that Zhang and Leidner (2014) observed that "workplace

cyberbullying behaviors are not likely to be treated as corporate crimes, [however] they are behaviors that can produce a hostile work climate and while not illegal, may violate organizational norms and policies" (p. 2).

In this regard, UK organisational research by Baruch (2005) found bullying via email to be at the same level as traditional face-to-face bullying. Furthermore, Feldman (2003) asserted that the frequency and complexity of abusive work emails has resulted in this platform being used for legal evidence and has been attributed to boosting third-party insurance coverage (Foster, 2003), thus indicating email-based bullying is on the rise. Research has revealed that emails can be used as an enabling tool to enact international or unintentional (miscommunications) hostility between organisational groups (Carlson & Zmud, 1999; Romm & Pliskin, 1997), or used in harassing and racist emails as identified in US public sector studies (Muhl, 2003).

2.9.6 Public sector culture

Organisationally designed intervention strategies that have traditionally been developed to mitigate or prevent negative workplace cyber communications include:

- technical resolutions, where the agency's computer systems and processes are designed to reduce cyber misuse or abuse;
- managerial, such as cyber behavioural policy, guidelines normally developed by an agency's human resource section; and
- social, such as employee perceptions of organisational justice and overarching legislative mandates that dictate codes of conduct (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006).

The sections below consider managerial and social elements, as both influence how individuals perceive and relate to their environment. The forthcoming subsection, entitled public sector legislation, regards Australian public sector-related legislative and policy prevention and intervention strategies to provide background into the public sector's employee code of conduct frameworks, within which bullying behaviour is deemed unlawful. An introduction into public sector laws and policies can be perused in section 1.2.1. Additionally, the researcher hopes that evidence from this study will help inform the development of new or refreshed workplace and public sector legislation that includes specific workplace cyberbullying definitions, and improved intervention and preventative frameworks.

Public sector legislation

Within the context of public sector employees, each Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local public services expresses employees' work and private online and offline behavioural standards through law or Code of Conduct (APSC, 2013c; *Public Service Act 1999*). In July 2013, amendments to the Commonwealth Australian Public Sector's (APS) Code of Conduct, *Public Service Act 1999,* the *Public Service Regulations 1999* and the new *Australian Public Service Commissioner's Directions 201*3, now means employees' private online conduct is policed for workplace commentary. After this amendment, a public servant's private Facebook posts were judged as breaching section 13 of the *Public Service Act 1999*, entitled the Code of Conduct (Adams, 2014; Anderson & Mannheim, 2013; Taylor, 2013; Wilson, 2013), and was dismissed from service (APSC, 2013c).

Employee dismissals, made as a consequence of their private social media communications (APSC, 2013c, 2014b), may be conducted irrespective of their right to privacy as an Australian citizen under the *Privacy Act 1988*. Furthermore, these dismissals may be conducted despite an employee's right to work in a bullying and harassment-free environment; in this case the employee argued the investigation and final dismissal from employment arose from a bullying complaint she had earlier raised against her manager.

All Australian citizens, including government employees are entitled, under the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth), to raise personal bullying and cyberbullying claims with their local police. This law makes it an offence for Australian citizens to use the internet, social media or telephone to menace, harass or cause offence. In this regard, existing legislative frameworks protecting employees from workplace bullying are vested in occupational work, health and safety policies, practices and procedures (Dollard & Bakker, 2010).

The Commonwealth *Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act 2011*, which came into effect in January 2012, represented harmonised Commonwealth, State and Territory laws in lieu of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1991* and has been gradually implemented across the nation. Under this law, a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) has a duty of care to ensure the health and safety of workers. In this regard, health includes both physical and psychological health including workplace harassment and bullying (Comcare, 2012, 2014). Comcare, the

Commonwealth agency who oversights Commonwealth government agencies' health and safety programs and claims, provides a *Bullying in the Workplace* factsheet that defines workplace bullying as repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or group of workers, that creates a risk to health and safety (Comcare, 2014a). Comcare reports that the overwhelming costs of psychological injury claims is now significantly effecting government organisations' compensation premiums (Comcare, 2014b). This agency also reports psychological injury claims (i.e., workplace bullying) as representing the greatest number claims raised by public servants, that these claims are generally complex, hard to evaluate, and expensive. When dealing with such cases, Comcare uses the guiding principles of no fault legislation, natural justice, onus of proof, standard of proof, and case law.

Duty of care

As a consequence of the House of Representative's workplace bullying inquiry (2012), in June 2013 the *Fair Work Amendment Act 2013* was passed providing workers the right to apply to the Fair Work Commission for an order to stop workplace bullying. This amendment to the *Fair Work Act 2009*, came into effect in January 2014 and defined bullying as repeated unreasonable behaviour conducted by a person or group towards a worker or group of workers at work that creates a risk to health and safety (Fair Work Commission, 2014). This amendment enables Australian employees to apply to the Fair Work Commission for an order to stop any reasonable claims of workplace bullying behaviour that is judged as risking the health or safety of the claimant.

In line with this legislation and the new WHS harmonisation laws, employers have an increased duty of care to manage workplace bullying as part of each organisation's ongoing risk mitigation planning, strategies and treatments. Within the context of the Australian public sector, this duty of care means the development of service-wide plus organisational-specific policy statements that clearly enunciate bullying behaviours and consequences, and the provision of Occupational Health and Safety Representatives in all workplaces (Safe Work Australia, 2013). For example, the Commonwealth's APSC raised an inter-departmental working group to develop public sector guidance on the risks and effects of cyber bullying and online harassment of employees; this guidance was released in October 2013 (APSC, 2012a, 2012b, 2013b).

Within this context, in late 2014 three employees from the Maritime Union of Australian and port operator DP World applied to the Fair Work Commission for a stop bullying order (Howe, 2015). Given the Commission can only consider workplace matters, this case is unique as it raises a unique "duty of care" question. That is, how is work-related cyberbullying defined given a perpetrator's physical location may not necessarily be physically located at the work site. As a result of this new workplace matter, the Commission found that the expression "while the worker is at work" may now incorporate conduct that occurs at any location or time of the day.

Table 2.2 summarises the definitions of face-to-face workplace bullying enshrined within law and/or codes of practice.

Table 2.2.

Examples of workplace bullying definitions

Commonwealth Guidance Note	"repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or group of persons at a workplace, which creates a risk to health and safety"
Fair Work Amendment Act, 2011	"A worker is bullied at work if: (a) while the worker is at work in a constitutionally-covered business: (i) an individual; or (ii) a group of individuals; repeatedly behaves unreasonably towards the worker, or a group of workers of which the worker is a member; and (b) that behaviour creates a risk to health and safety."
Workplace Health and Safety Act, 2011	"bullying is repeated unreasonable behaviour that could reasonably be considered to be humiliating, intimidating, threatening or demeaning to a person, or group of persons, which creates a risk to health and safety." Employers have a duty of care under the Act to provide a healthy and safe working environment and safe systems of work.
NSW & VIC Guidance Note	"repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or group of workers that creates a risk to health and safety"
QLD Code of Practice	"repeated behaviour...by a person, including the person's employer or a co-worker or group of co-workers of the person that: (a) is unwelcome and unsolicited (b) the person considers to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening (c) a reasonable person would consider to be offensive, humiliating, intimidating or threatening"
SA s.55 (A) of the OHS Act	"any behaviour that is repeated, systematic and directed towards an employee or group of employees that a reasonable person, having regard to the circumstances, would expect to victimise, humiliate, undermine or threaten and which creates a risk to health and safety"
WA Code of Practice	"repeated unreasonable or inappropriate behaviour directed towards a worker, or group of workers, that creates a risk to health and safety"
TAS Guidance Note	"persistent and repeatedly aggressive behaviour (that) goes beyond a one-off disagreement, … increases in intensity and becomes offensive or harmful to someone,...can include psychological and physical violence"
NT Guidance Note	"repeated, unreasonable or inappropriate behaviour directed towards a worker, or group of workers, that creates a risk to health and safety"
ACT Guidance Note	"repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or group of persons at a workplace, which creates a risk to health and safety"

Source of data: Australian Productivity Commission (Cth). (2010, April 6). *Performance benchmarking of Australian business regulation: Occupational health and safety - 2010*. Australian Productivity Commission, Australia. Retrieved from http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/regulationbenchmarking/ohs/report

Table 2.3 provides definitions of occupational violence used in Australian codes of practice and guidance (Australian Productivity Commission, 2010).

Table 2.3.

Definitions of occupational violence

Clth Guidance Note	"any action, incident or behaviour that departs from reasonable conduct in which a person is assaulted, threatened, harmed or injured in the course of, or as a direct result of, his or her work — can include threatening behaviour, verbal or written threats, harassment, verbal abuse and physical attacks"
NSW Guidance Note	"verbal and emotional threats, and physical attack to an individual's person or property by another individual or group — can include verbal abuse over the phone, threats of violence, threats of a sexual nature, ganging up on an individual and physical or sexual assault"
VIC Guidance Note	"any incident where an employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances arising out of, or in the course of, their employment — can include, but is not limited to, verbal, physical or psychological abuse, punching, scratching, biting, grabbing, pushing, threats, attack with a weapon, throwing objects/furniture, sexual assault"
QLD Guidance Note	"any incident where a worker is physically attacked or threatened in the workplace or during workplace activities. 'Threat' means a statement (verbal) or behaviour that causes a reasonable person to believe they are in danger of being physically attacked. 'Physical attack' means the direct or indirect application of force by a person to the body of, or to clothing or equipment worn by, another person where that application creates a risk to health & safety"
SA Guidance Note	"Violence at work is defined as any incident where an employer or employee is abused, threatened or assaulted in situations relating to their work. 'Abuse' is any unreasonable behaviour that involves the misuse of physical or psychological strength or power. "Threat" s a statement of the intent to harm a person or damage their property; and 'assault' is any attempt to cause injury to a person and includes actual physical harm."
WA Code of Practice	"actions or incidents that may physically or psychologically harm another person. Violence and aggression are present in situations where workers and other people are threatened, attacked or physically assaulted at work"
TAS Guidance Note	"not defined separately from bullying. Includes psychological and/or physical violence (including physical abuse) under a broad definition of bullying"
NT Information Bulletin	"any incident in which employees and others are abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances arising out of, or in the course of work undertaken."
ACT Guidance Note	"any action or incident which causes physical or psychological harm to another person. It includes situations where workers and/or other people are threatened, attacked or physically assaulted at work — it also includes non-physical violence, such as verbal abuse, harassment, intimidation and threatening behaviour, which may also significantly affect a person's health and wellbeing"

Source of data: Australian Productivity Commission (Cth). (2010, April 6). *Performance Benchmarking of Australian business regulation: Occupational health and safety - 2010*. Australian Productivity Commission, Australia

Considered together, Tables 2.2 and 2.3 shed light on Australian societal and cultural expectations of what constitutes traditional workplace bullying under existing legislation (noting that legislation is driven by changing social views), and how these are viewed within the "duty of care" context. While these definitions provide Commonwealth, States and Territories exemplars of "acceptable" examples workplace power (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2009 & 2011; Smith, 2007), the Tables also show how existing legislation articulates workplace bullying as repeated examples of organisational violence and aggression that is largely resolved employees' access to organisational justice. This language indicates the view that, at least from a legal perspective, traditional face-to-face workplace bullying manifests as a consequence of organisational violence and aggression, rather than any other factor such as new technologies, ambiguous or unclear policies and governance practices, poor culture, continual organisational change or job uncertainty.

Australia's legislative complexity is also seen in the six limbs of law and regulatory anti-workplace bullying processes enshrined within Victoria (an Eastern state of Australia) through which must navigate if they decide to prosecute or seek a workplace resolution (Butler, 2004; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment, 2012). These six legislative and regulatory limbs encompass, firstly, the OHS laws, where the regulator may prosecute on behalf of the employee, and secondly, under Workers' Compensation laws, workers can lodge claims for weekly payments such as medical expenses, and only have the right to sue if the behaviours triggers a "serious injury" thresholds. The third legislative limb is represented by Criminal law, under which employees may seek police intervention to prosecute the perpetrator and seek compensation through the criminal law courts as a "victim of crime". The fourth is denoted by Anti-Discrimination legislation, whereby individuals have the right to sue on condition the employee meets "protected" categories, or has suffered other harm within these laws. The fifth legislative limb is enshrined under the Commonwealth's *Fair Work Act 2009,* under which the employee is empowered to sue provided certain breaches have occurred, and lastly, workers are entitled under their employment contract to sue within the context of unfair dismissal action, or right to sue for breach of express or implied terms.

In summary, unlike the new legislation passed by New Zealand, entitled the *Harmful Digital Communications Bill, 2013,* which is specifically designed to

protect citizens from the negative effects arising from CMC, Australia's legislative protection is cumbersome and confusing. Existing Australian legislation is often re-interpreted by each public sector's employee management commission or board (such as the Commonwealth's APSC) through staff management policies and guidelines that are developed to suit each government organisation's employment conditions (APSC, 2013b, 2013c). Traditional forms of workplace harassment and bullying is generally viewed by government agencies as a health and safety matter under the appropriate Federal or State/Territory laws. Traditional face-to-face workplace bullying, is expensive for both government liability insurers such as Comcare (2014), and for public sector agencies. As yet, no laws have been developed (or existing laws amended) to account for workplace cyberbullying risks.

Public sector policy and governance

Studies demonstrate that healthy, harassment free work environments are more likely to evolve when the organisation's behavioural expectations are clearly articulated by clear policy guidelines that are actively supported by management (Berry, Ones, & Sackett, 2007; Cortina, 2008; Cortina et al., 2001; Dietz, Robinson, Folger, Baron, & Schulz, 2003; Estes & Wang, 2008; Lim & Cortina, 2005; Lim et al., 2008). Clear legislative and policy-based guidelines supporting good workplace behaviour enable organisations to develop sound governance processes (APSC, 2013c, 2014b). "Good" governance influences employees' values, and their attitudes towards an organisation's code of ethics and conduct (APSC, 2013c, 2014b; Peters, 2004), and is demonstrated through well aligned work practices and rules that cohesively cascade through business outcomes (Boucaut, 2001, 2003). Governance processes are recognised through a number of formats and frameworks, including mature consultation practices and meeting procedures, high level service quality protocols, clarity of roles and responsibilities, and good working relationships (Peters, 2004). These processes are recognised by accountability, transparency of processes, adherence to legislation and responsiveness, inclusive participation, and effectiveness and efficiency. In such conditions, managers are empowered to make and implement the best possible decisions.

Within this contextual basis it would be reasonable to suggest that workplace bullying behaviour represents an objective, observable and measurable organisational behaviour. According to researchers (Agervold, 2007; Einarsen et al., 2003), this is

rarely the case as harassing and bullying behaviours are covert and almost impossible for external observers to objectively record. Studies by Björkqvist (1994, 2001) found that witnesses' perceptions of what a target may describe as bullying behaviour can vastly differ. Furthermore, work colleagues' subjective perceptions are influenced by personal experiences of traditional workplace bullying, the individual's experience and empathy levels, and whether the perpetrator was perceived as organisationally powerful and thus "entitled" to act aggressively. In these cases, work colleagues or other observers may support the perpetrator rather than the victim. Consequently anti-bullying organisational policies are inherently characterised by ambiguity and a range of terminology to describe the behaviour (White, 2000). This juxtaposition between explicit and overt organisational human resource policies with the actual, yet more covert, employee behaviours has been linked to a term entitled "organisational deviance" (Robinson & Bennet, 1995).

Robinson and Bennet (1995) defines organisational deviance as "voluntary behaviour that violates the significant organisational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organisation, its members, or both" (p. 556). This definition includes the concept of "personal aggression" that involves a violence continuum of interpersonal aggression ranging from verbal abuse to physical violence (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2007; Mayhew, 2007; Rogers & Kelloway, 1997; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). Interrupting such behaviour relies on robust reporting and conflict resolution processes that, according to Caponecchia and Wyatt (2011), are only successful when employees feel confident in their organisation's management authenticity and support in enforcing the resolution process.

In this regard, employees who feel confident that bullying incidents will be quickly and impartially resolved are, in turn, more likely to raise these issues in an effort to seek resolution. Indeed, one measurable test of employee confidence in management conflict resolution actions are identified in annual personnel health audits, such as the Commonwealth public service's annual State of the Service census (APSC, 2013c, 2014b). Organisations evidencing high confidence are likely to report medium with occasional high peaks of bullying (resulting from, for example, sudden and extreme organisational changes) and low employee attrition rates (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; White, 2000). Employees who are less confident in management's support in organisational conflict resolution processes are less

likely to report bullying, particularly if management is perceived as covertly or overtly punishing whistle-blowers. Furthermore, the less likely employees report bullying the more likely bullying sub-cultures develop, and the higher the employee attrition rates.

For example, in the Commonwealth's 2013-14 State of the Service Report (the *Report*), found a consistent level of employees who reported face-to-face bullying (i.e., 16% in 2012-13 to 17% in 2013-14) or witnessed it (21% in 2012-14) (APSC, 2013c, 2014b). In 2012-13, a 30% increase in mental harm claims (i.e., psychological injury) was reported, which resulted in a 32% increase in the cost of agencies' compensation claims (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment, 2012). Furthermore, in 2013-14, only 35% of workplace bullying witnesses officially reported the behaviour (APSC, 2014b), indicating a lack of trust in organisational intervention processes. In this regard, the Report (APSC, 2014b) claimed employees were less likely to report aggressive workplace behaviour if they felt no action would be taken, or were concerned of the consequences of reporting the behaviour. Employees also reported that management appeared to accept the harassing or bullying behaviour, or felt insufficiently trained and educated to know whether the behaviour was serious enough to warrant reporting. While workplace cyberbullying across social media platforms (not email) was observed as "low relative to other forms of bullying and harassment, the impacts it causes are no less severe" (APSC, 2013c, p. 81) than traditional face-to-face bullying.

These stable statistics from 2012 to 2014 (APSC, 2013c; 2014b) indicate that workplace harassment and bullying behaviours are consistent. In view of the number Commonwealth agencies' Capability Review reports (APSC, 2014a), these behaviours also appear entrenched in many departments despite the "no bullying" and intra-agency cross-hierarchy communications strategies, policies, legislation or leadership and communication educational programs developed by most agencies. It is possible a cultural mismatch between accepted and explicit "whole of service" code of conduct behaviours (e.g., *Public Service Act 1999, s.13),* as identified in code of conduct legislation and policies, and the implicit "real" sub-group behaviours observed and experienced by public servants. This is somewhat indicated by the 2012-13 *Report,* which states that "Taking a highly formal approach to allegations of bullying and harassment may entrench positions and make long-lasting resolution

hard to achieve." (p.68). Nor does any *Report* suggest that public servants feel rewarded for reporting bullying workplace behaviours (APSC, 2014b). Indeed, the 2012-13 *Report* stated that "allegations [of harassment and bullying] aris[ing] from the interaction between individual behaviour, potential power imbalances and individual resilience" may result in "a significant impact on employee engagement and wellbeing and is of concern" (p. 63). However, this report did not indicate whether entrenched explicit or implicit culturally acceptable behaviours were fostering face-to-face bullying or cyberbullying. Consequently, employees' perceptions regarding impact of the organisation's cultural processes (governance, legislation, policies, processes) on workplace behaviours thus warrants further examination within the context of this research into workplace cyberbullying in the Australian public sector and has resulted in a fourth hypothesis raised under the RQ2 pertaining to prevalence.

2.10 RATIONALE | HYPOTHESIS 5 (RQ2)

Boucaut (2001) observed that "Within all organisations there are explicit and implicit rules that guide people's behaviour." (p. 70). Explicit rules (explicit culture) include legislation, policies, official rules and regulations that are enlivened through governance processes such as committees, delegations of authority, while the implicit rules (implicit culture) are unofficial yet tacitly understood through an implied sense of "this is the way we do things around here", and which may or may not align to the explicit rules. It is currently unknown how employees perceive an organisation's explicit and implicit culture, workplace behaviours, values and attitudes. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 investigates Australian public sector employees' perceptions as to the efficacy, or effectiveness, of public sector organisations' explicit culture to deal effectively with workplace cyberbullying events, in a manner that supports public servants:

- Hypothesis 5: Workplace cyberbullying levels are correlated with employees' decreased perceptions of organisational cultural efficacy.

This Hypothesis relates to RQ2:

- How do Australian public sector employees perceive workplace cyberbullying as affecting their workplace stress, job satisfaction, work performance, and organisational culture? (consequences)

Within the context of the Literature Review, the element of organisational culture is seen as an organisational antecedent of workplace cyberbullying. However, this research aims to identify employees' perceptions regarding the ability of an organisational explicit culture (i.e., legislation, policies, rules and regulations that are enacted through governance processes) to support employees in resolving workplace cyberbullying conflict. The researcher expected this project to confirm that employees not only viewed these traditional support mechanisms as generally being ineffective in responding to face-to-face traditional forms of aggressive workplace behaviours (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2009, 2011), but are impeding any useful attempts to resolve workplace cyberbullying issues, events and outcomes. The researcher believes that that this research will find that, from an employee's perspective, traditional workplace cultural policies and practices are failing them as a consequence of workplace cyberbullying.

2.11 FACE-TO-FACE WORKPLACE BULLYING & CYBERBULLYING | PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

To summarise the sub-sections above, humans learn, model and develop social behaviours to identify their sense of place within the context of their group or community (or organisation) (Bandura, 1973). As a consequence of this social learning, humans develop a working understanding of their community's social rules or etiquette that entitle them to become accepted members of their society (Coovert & Thompson, 2003). This modelled behaviour can also be used to explain the formation of organisational culture where employers and employees may observe and adopt accepted offline and online work practices and social norms (Ertureten et al., 2013; West et al., 2014). How organisational structures develop social systems, such as those found within explicit and implicit cultures, was explored by Boucaut (2001). This study used eleven sensitising concepts that evolved from Gidden's (1984) Theory of Structuration to investigate organisations' use of social processes, such as rules and governance processes, vision and goals, to understand organisational-specific issues relating to workplace bullying.

Communication technologies, or CMCs, are now used by organisations to augment interpersonal communication (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006) and facilitate work outcomes. These technologies also facilitate workplace cyberbullying. Workplace cyberbullying outcomes encompass both organisational technical and

individual behavioural variables at the individual (primary – target/victim), group (secondary – workplace witnesses), organisational and extra-organisational levels (tertiary – across or outside organisational boundaries). The transmutation of workplace cyberbullying across cyber technologies is illustrated by the multilevel process model of cyber-based aggression entitled the *Process Model of Cyberaggression* (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006, p. 470). This multilevel model highlights a relationship between the events, factors, variables (organisational, social/situational and personal), and primary, secondary and tertiary outcomes.

Given the pace of cyber technologies, this model does not incorporate detail on the technological features and characteristics of each cyber platform and instead focuses on the social psychology underpinning employees decisions, interactions and reactions. Instead this research will discuss the generalities, such as mobility, offered by work computers, smart phones and Tablets.

2.12 THEORETICAL MODEL

This research proposes that people's thoughts feelings and behaviours are influenced by the actual, imagined, or inferred presence of other people, as described by *Social Psychology Theory* (Allport, 1954), which in some cases can sometimes result in cognitive fusion (Hayes, 2004; Wicksell, Renofalt, Olsson, Bond, & Melin, 2008). This cognitive process suggests that an individual's thoughts and behaviours are influenced by what other people perceive as the "truth". Furthermore, organisational researchers have developed numerous behavioural theories that describe how and why organisationally aggressive behaviour occurs between employees (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). Under this umbrella, *Social Information Processing* (SIP) *Theory* posits the notion that workplace CMC lacks the usual range of social inflection and tones otherwise conveyed during face-to-face conversations.

Furthermore, SIP theory asserts that employees are influenced by their group's attitudes and behaviours and will emulate these attitudes and behaviours across workplace CMC communications. In this regard, Figure 2.4 displays the theoretical model used by this research.

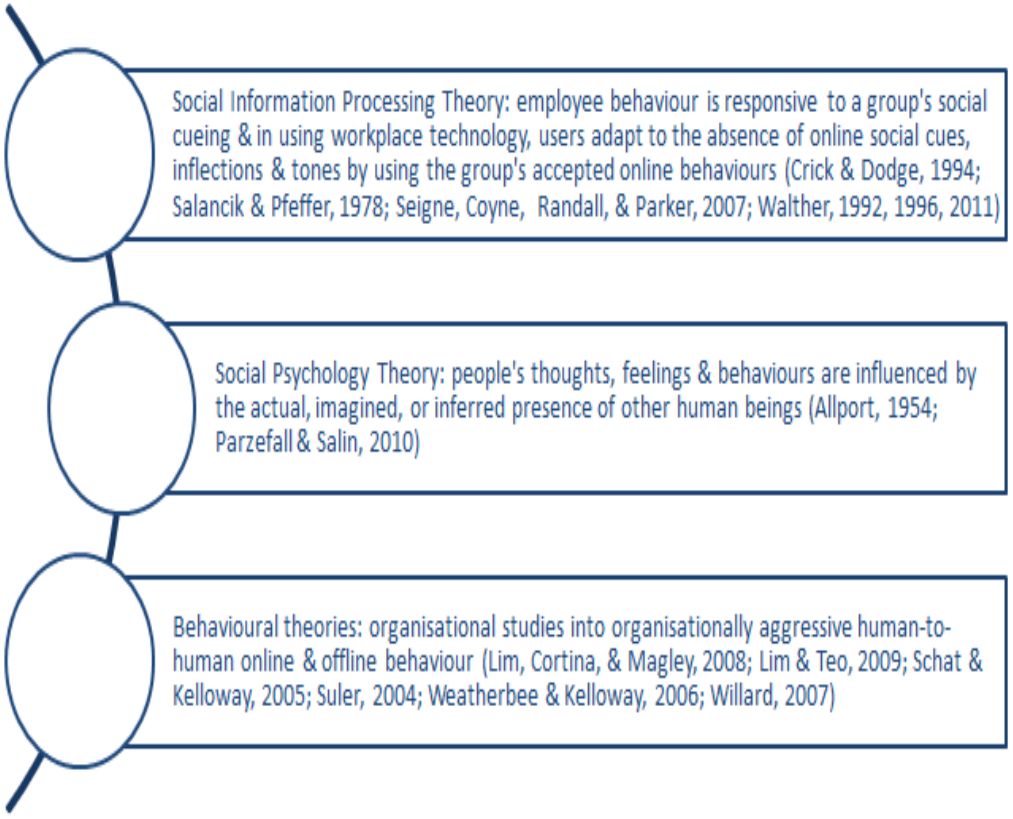


Figure 2.4. Summary of theoretical model.

In this regard, this section encompasses the following subsections (a) *Social Psychology Theory*, (b) behavioural theories, and (c) *Social Information Processing Theory*.

2.12.1 *Social Psychology Theory*

This dissertation firstly considered how the online workplace behaviour of Australian government employees' is defined in legislation and policy, and, in turn, enacted by employees (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2009; Moayed et al., 2006). Within this context and that of workplace cyberbullying, this research seeks to examine negative face-to-face organisational behaviours and their impact on corporate culture (e.g., the way we do things around here).

Given negative human behaviours often encompass a broad range of conduct (Monks & Coyne, 2011), social psychological theory was deemed appropriate for

this research into Australian public servants' perceptions of the prevalence and impact of workplace cyberbullying across government organisations. Indeed, a diverse range of definitions, concepts, constructs, and terms have been used by past studies to describe aggressive human behaviours and how they manifest within organisations (Bennett & Robinson, 2003). For example, in considering the various elements often attributed to basic (non-organisational) human aggression, Graumann (1998) asserted that workplace aggression was an "intrinsically… social affair" (p. 41). Studies have since asserted that human social affairs are established within the milieu of social psychology (Levine & Hogg, 2010). Social psychology examines how people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours are influenced by the actual, imagined, or inferred presence of other human beings (Allport, 1954).

Many established social psychology theories have attempted to explain human beings' social quasi-negative and negative organisationally-based behaviours (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). Some of these behaviours may appear benign, such as employees who use corporate ICT platforms for personal rather than work purposes, however some behaviour may be blatantly disruptive and even criminal, such as playing office politics through selective emailing, to fraud or data sabotage. Studies have found that how we explain this behaviour to ourselves may also shape our perceptions as to what is considered acceptable conduct, and may influence our collective understanding of what are deemed acceptable behaviours reflecting organisational power (Robbins, Millett, & Waters-Marsh, 2004). Robbins et al., (2004) posit the notion that these changing social perceptions create boundaries (often enshrined through legislation) about how this behaviour may be ethically and morally applied in our daily lives, including their application within organisations – culture, attitudes and acceptable team and group interactions. Social psychology is therefore an important lens by which to consider organisational behaviour and employees' perceptions. As a theoretical framework, it constitutes an essential building block in this research into how and why negative human behaviours, in this case cyberbullying, manifest at work and the impact this has on employees (Ambrose, 2009; Oskamp, 1986; Sendjaya et al., 2008).

2.12.2 Behavioural theories

This research into workplace cyberbullying within the Australian public sector and its impact as perceived by employees is founded in social psychology, which

considers the effect of social influences on employees, supervisors and managers and organisations. As a result of past social psychology and organisational studies, various theoretical models have been developed to explain or understand the process behind organisationally aggressive human-to-human behaviour, and comprehend the effect negative workplace culture and CMC has on employees and organisations (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). In this regard, as this research investigates employees' perceptions of workplace stress arising as a consequence of workplace cyberbullying this research may have relevance within the context of *Psychosocial Safety Climate* theory (Dollard & Bakker, 2010). This theory measures workplace priorities and measures, such as politics, practices, and procedures, developed for the protection of workers' psychological health and wellbeing.

In investigating the causes of aggressive, anti-social workplace behaviour such as bullying, Leymann (1996) found that hostile and aggressive physical and/or non-physical workplace behaviours were exacerbated by four negative behaviours within hierarchical rules-based organisations including:

1. deficiencies in work design,
2. deficiencies in leadership behaviour,
3. a socially exposed position of the victim, and
4. a low moral standard in the department.

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and Attribution Theory (Heider, 1958) was used in research that found that family-based hostile behaviours emulated from childhood and into adulthood would be used to explain/justify, adulthood aggression (Baldry, 2003), and used to justify aggressive workplace behaviours (Schat & Kelloway, 2005). This finding was further developed by Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly (1998), who found empirical evidence indicating aggressive behaviours are modelled and learned from organisational leaders and/or notable work-colleagues and reinforced or triggered by culturally accepted norms and practices. Some of the terms most commonly used to describe negative workplace behaviours included "deviant behaviour" (Robinson & Bennett, 1995), "aggressive work behaviour" (O'Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew, 1996), "organizational misbehaviour" (Vardi & Wiener, 1996), and "antisocial behaviour" to reflect the harmful nature of these acts (Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998).

These approaches, well grounded in established theory, have resulted in important advances in understanding why and when employees engage in antisocial behaviour (Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). Within this general space, the social cognitive, social learning or socio-cultural theory asserts that individuals use a range of social learning and cognitive processes to observe, think and learn about how their behaviour impacts work outcomes and therefore behaviour is learned directly through a process of observing the environment and culture (Bandura, 1986; Olweus, 1993). According to Hayes (2004) "human language and cognition are both dependent on relational frames. When we think, reason, speak with meaning, or listen with understanding, we do so by deriving relations among events – among words and events, words and words, events and events." (p. 649). This process is "amplified by culture" (Hayes, 2004, p. 650) and is the basis for Relational Frame Theory (RFT). RFT considers how the cognitive process, entitled cognitive fusion, by which humans can literally buy into the belief that, for example, a bully's verbal or text-based words are true, leading to the target believing the words, meaning and associated thoughts as "truth" (Wicksell et al., 2008).

Within an institutionalised and/or organisational context that is generally rules-based (i.e., explicit culture), certain situations, environments, and work expectations result in people modelling and/or copying behaviours from work colleagues and/or leaders (Leymann, 1996; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998; Vardi & Wiener, 1996). These elements, together with personality-driven responses (Martinko, Gundlach, & Douglas, 2002), have been found to be key factors driving learned aggressive human behaviour (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008, 2013). Therefore, environmental workplace factors, such as organisational culture and climate, job and role ambiguity and conflict, workload and interpersonal conflicts, may implicitly or explicitly promote bullying behaviours (Leymann, 1996). In this regard, socio-cultural theory asserts that a systemised number of ongoing accepted minor or low-level workplace aggressive behaviours, such as verbal incivility (Anderson & Pearson, 1999), may influence the development of organisational culture exemplified by high-level combative behaviour and even physical violence (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). This theory found that environment workplace factors may affect a target's ability to communicate adequately, and maintain social contacts, maintain their professional reputation, occupational situation and physical health (Leymann, 1996).

Other social psychologists have attempted to operationalise these theories into process models more applicable within hierarchical organisational contexts, particularly to explain ongoing behaviours where the consequences of workplace aggression, in terms of procedural responses, prompt ensuing behaviours (Schat & Kelloway, 2005). For example, the linear *Social Information Processing* (SIP) *Theory* (Walther, 2011) used this construct to explain peoples' work attitudes and subsequent work-based behaviours as being partially determined and confined within the organisation's social contextual expectations or culture (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Fulk, Steinfield, Schmitz, and Power (1987) further advanced Salancik & Pfeffer's (1978) original SIP theory by emphasising the importance of people's attitudes, job design and work culture, as influenced by individuals' recollections or perceptions of acceptable and non-acceptable social behaviour. The SIP perspective, therefore, is useful within the context of organisation social hierarchy, culture, development and communication.

SIP theory postulates that human social responses are generally vulnerable to numerous external factors and, therefore, susceptible to misinterpretation and misunderstanding (Seigne et al., 2007). This is described as a four stage perception continuum (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). This relates to workplace cyberbullying by describing how peoples' perceptions about their treatment at work derive from past external experience and internal judgements. The first stage is selective attention and comprehension, whereby individuals become aware of something or someone based on the intensity, uniqueness and repetition of the interaction. At stage two, encoding and simplification entails how humans interpret environmental stimuli based on previous lived experiences and use these as mental models or beliefs to classify, simplify and distinguish between current events, objects or schemata. Stage three is articulated as storage and retention, allows for the encoding of information into the three compartments of short, long or limited memory capability. And the final retrieval and response process describes how people retrieve past information to form judgments and decisions about situations.

2.12.3 *Social Information Processing Theory*

Within the precepts of social psychology, which examines how people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours are influenced by the actual, imagined, or inferred presence of other human beings (Allport, 1954), this research used the *Social*

Information Processing (SIP) *Theory* (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). SIP is justified as it derives from the notion that individuals use information from their immediate social environments to interpret events, develop appropriate attitudes, and understand expectations concerning their behaviour and its consequences (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). In applying this theory to this research, SIP examined how workplace CMC users, working in highly regulated and rules-based organisational and group settings, adapt to the restrictions or absence of online social cues (tones, inflections normally conveyed through offline conversation or online emoticons) across workplace CMC to develop workplace relationships (Walther, 1992, 1994). Within the context of this research, the SIP perspective provides insight into how government employees' attitudes and online/CMC "behaviour are responsive to [their organisation's and group's social] cuing during prolonged and intense group interaction" (Fulk et al., 1987, p. 545). Thus, individual employees, "working in a shared social environment, will receive similar social cues that convince them that certain types and levels of antisocial behaviour are acceptable" (Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998, p. 658). Previous theories regarding CMC versus face-to-face communication resulting in the following concerns:

Social presence theory regarding a lack of nonverbal cues of warmth,

Media richness theory pertaining to the complexity of messages that can be handled efficiently and varies with technological medium, and

Paucity of social context cues in online workplace communication.

Text-based youth studies conducted by Hinduja and Patchin (2008) used criminology to explain perpetrators' online bullying as a learned, yet suppressed, behaviour trait. Workplace research investigating why harassment constructs led to negative attitudes and offline (Lim et al., 2008) and online incivility (Lim & Teo, 2009) used the disempowerment theory developed by Kane and Montgomery (1998). This construct explained how an employee's feelings regarding negatively associated workplace event/s may impact their perceptions of workplace stress levels, attitudes and behaviour (Coyne et al., In press).

Other research employed the disinhibition behavioural theory, which asserts that the anonymous, detached nature of virtual cyber communication can lead to people ignoring social boundaries (Suler, 2004) that are otherwise defined through

detection, social disapproval or punishment (Willard, 2007). More recent studies (Zhang & Leidner, 2014) considered the phenomenon within the context of rational choice theory of corporate crime (Paternoster & Simpson, 1996) and naturalisation theory (Sykes & Matza, 1957) to explore how perpetrators internally justify their unsocial and in some cases, illegal, workplace behaviour (Vance & Siponen, 2010).

However, the SIP theory espoused by Joseph Walther (1992), who explored CMC to investigate adult online interactions within large rules-based, institutional organisations. Joseph Walther researched the implications of CMC within the context of social psychology to determine how people use cyber platforms to learn, adopt, form, maintain and manage social inter-communication practices over time (Bandura, 1973). The rationale behind why SIP was used in this research derived from its guiding principle:

> When CMC and FTF (face-to-face) groups are allowed to continue over time and accumulate numerous messages, this continuity has significant effects on groups' relational communication, and social penetration effects occur.
>
> (Walther & Burgoon, 1992, p. 77)

According to Fulk, Steinfield, Schmitz and Power (1987), SIP relies on three key assumptions regarding the cyber platform and the user:

1. **Objectivity**. Core premise founded on the notion that CMC contain certain inherent properties that may be objectively described, including the cyber platform's capabilities, social presence and context, information content.
2. **Saliency**. Assumption that a range of differences in inherent characteristics across different media on sociability, warmth, personal-ness are salient to other users, where variations in objective task features such as the need for social presence are understood as relevant by CMC users.
3. **Choice-making processes**. Individual attitudes and behaviours are perceived as cognitive processes in response to the CMC's inherent and salient features, therefore CMC users' attitudes and behaviour develop as a result of their understanding of the cyber platform's capabilities.

In developing this theoretical model, Walther (1992) argued that, despite the absence of nuanced nonverbal social cues across text-based CMC, employees can slowly develop sound professional work relationships using cyber platforms. This is

achieved when workers use the organisation's inherent social context, or culture, as a template by which to interpret the group's accepted attitudes and behaviours (Walther, Loh & Granka, 2005). Another way of looking at SIP is; CMC users develop impressions of other employees using both the social context of the work culture and their perceptions of past behaviours to interpret the context of cyber content (Fulk, et al., 1987). Cyber messages are compared against CMC users' perceptions or understanding of accepted work behaviours, who then modify their online responses. As a consequence of a more contemporary research, Walther et al., (2005) offered an addendum to this original construct. They asserted that employees facing these online obstacles at work (professional text-based online messages may lack nuanced social cues) may instead interpret and develop online behaviour by modelling their perceptions of accepted face-to-face corporate culture (Leymann, 1996; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998; Vardi & Wiener, 1996).

Therefore, the revised theoretical framework developed by Walther and other researchers over the past two decades (Heinemann, 2011; Tidwell & Walther 2002; Walther, 1992, 1996, 2007, 2009, 2011; Walther et al., 2005) suggests employees using CMCs to form professional work relationships do so within the context of what they perceive as group or organisationally accepted behaviours. SIP therefore offers this research a sound perspective by exploring interpersonal and relational development for organisational CMC users (Heinemann, 2011). This construct is thus used to explain how employees generally interpret work cyber communications through the lens of an organisation's explicit behavioural codes.

However, developing online professional relationships was found to take longer than face-to-face interactions, as the former required a larger amount of CMC-related content and time to analyse it (Walther, 2011). Furthermore, text-based CMC's asynchronous interactions, being less spontaneous than face-to-face interactions, may slow down tasks and impede the development and maintenance of professional relationships (Tidwell & Walther, 2002; Walther, 1992, 2009). Furthermore, SIP theory asserts a hyperpersonal perspective (Walther, 1996), whereby text-based CMC users self-select the type and method of their online communication and presentation (Walther, 2007).

According to Walther (1996, 2007), hyperpersonal communication is separate from impersonal (transactional) and interpersonal (social) when "users experience

commonality and are self-aware, physically separated, and communicating via a limited-cues channel that allows them to selectively still present and edit; to construct and reciprocate representations of their partners and relations without the interference of environmental reality" (p. 33). Hyperpersonal communication encompasses elements that enable the user and receiver to consciously edit the content of their communication and develop idealised versions of themselves (Heinemann, 2011; Walther, 1996, 2007). This form of CMC is particularly relevant in professionally-based CMC where users consciously decide on what to reveal or conceal about themselves, thus leading to potentially more emotive interactions than would otherwise be the case in face-to-face conversations (Heinemann, 2011; Walther, 2011). This process may intensify when users are using non-cue CMC, which is characterised by a lack of social cuing, tone and inflection (Walther, 1996).

Limitations associated with SIP theory (Walther, 2007, 2011; Walther et al., 2005) generally pertains to its focus on relationships that are purely developed across CMC technologies, and does not describe how face-to-face interactions affect online workplace relationships. For example, this theoretical framework does not explain how a face-to-face victim transforms into an online bully at work. This theoretical principle is particularly pertinent within the context of this workplace cyberbullying research, which investigated the prevalence and consequences of online bullying within an organisational context and between public servants working in government agencies. Government employees are expected to conduct professional emails and other cyber communications and to restrict to develop a neutral tone across workplace CMC (APSC, 2013c). Furthermore, Australian public sector employees adhere to legislated mandates articulating workers general conduct; Commonwealth public servants are expected to adhere to these mandates both inside and outside work as described in the *Public Service Act 1999*. This research will therefore determine if public servants are more likely to rely on their ability to interpret CMC messages through their understanding of the workplace social context (organisational explicit and implicit culture), and if this process is intensified when experiencing workplace aggression, stress, and/or job ambiguity (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

In conclusion, this SIP theory constitutes a sustainable and robust premise upon which to consider this research into organisational cyberbullying in the Australian public sector.

2.13 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

As indicated in Chapter 1, this study represents the first published academic research investigating Australian public servants' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying and its impact on their workplace stress, job satisfaction and performance, and efficacy of organisational culture in dealing with this phenomenon. The Literature Review both identified this research topic as a current information gap and assisted in shaping this study's focusing theme: What is the prevalence, and what are the consequences, of negative workplace cyber communication (cyberbullying) in the Australian public sector? This theme shaped two research questions and five hypotheses aimed at examining employees' perceptions about the prevalence rates and consequences of workplace cyberbullying. Importantly, the researcher is unaware of any academic literature regarding the prevalence and consequences of workplace cyberbullying within Australian government organisations. This research is therefore well placed to satisfy this literature gap and to provide an insight into how government employees perceive workplace cyberbullying.

In brief, the Literature Review provided a raft of bullying and workplace bullying definitions and concepts that formed the basis of this research into workplace cyberbullying (about which little is known). The Review considered the antecedence, prevalence rates, consequences and definitions of both face-to-face (offline) workplace bullying and workplace cyberbullying and included:

a) human aggressive behaviours, the definitions and elements of face-to-face bullying and workplace bullying,

b) online bullying or cyberbullying, including the impact of global social media technologies and smart devices, juvenile and youth cyberbullying studies, and the definitions and elements of workplace cyberbullying,

c) prevalence and measurement challenges known for both face-to-face workplace bullying and cyberbullying,

d) organisational antecedents, including describing the elements of organisational aggression and how it is legitimised, how personality traits can create inter-organisational aggression, the elements underpinning organisational conflict such as predatory, dispute-related and group bullying, the impact of outdated governance frameworks in creating

dissonance between explicit and implicit accepted organisational behaviours,

e) public sector organisations' explicit prevention and intervention processes that set the tone for explicit accepted organisational behaviours together with the impact of implicit behavioural norms (implicit culture) that can often undermine explicit culture (legislation, policies, governance processes),

f) the theoretical models used in past workplace cyberbullying research, and

g) introduced SIP (Walther, 1992, 1996) as the theoretical model used by this research.

Face-to-face workplace bullying behaviours were described as interactions between an aggressor and target that takes place at work (Zapf, 1999). This is where the aggressor's hierarchical position or personal influence is used to change the target's work environment or tasks, place them into social isolation, ridicules, gossips about or unnecessarily criticises or threatened the target traditional workplace bullying is generally viewed as hostile, anti-social workplace behaviour (Salin, 2001). The conceptual elements of traditional face-to-face workplace bullying encompassed; (a) repetitiveness - the extent to which the target is exposed to the behaviour, (b) intensity (or duration) of the perpetrator's behaviour (as perceived by the target), (c) the accidental or malicious intent of the perpetrator, and (d) the perception of power imbalance, where the target often feels powerless to protect themselves (Rigby, 2002). Importantly, the Literature Review found that the impact of prolonged face-to-face workplace bullying affects employees' mental, emotional and physical health (Einarsen et al., 2003; Estes & Wang, 2008; Hoel & Gig, 2008; Lim & Cortina, 2005; Turney, 2003).

This chapter also articulated parallel conceptual elements of workplace cyberbullying including; (a) power imbalances, (b) repetitiveness, (c) intent of the perpetrator (accidental or deliberate), and (d) intensity of the behaviour, albeit with a technological flavour. Crucially, the Literature Review found that while existing workplace cyberbullying research generally employed many similar elements to face-to-face bullying (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Cross et al., 2009; Li, 2007), as listed above, these elements tended to exhibit a technological twist when ascribed

within the context of workplace cyberbullying. For example the notion of repetitiveness in traditional face-to-face bullying regards the persistency of the behaviours conducted over a 6 or 12 month period. However, the concept of "repetitiveness" in workplace cyberbullying generally pertained to a number of elements including the technology's capacity to (a) public mass broadcast and anonymity, (b) increase the intensity (ferocity) of the interactions, and (c) intent including accidental or malicious cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Tokunaga, 2010;

Possibly most importantly, targets cannot now escape workplace cyberbullying as these acts can be conducted by the perpetrator (and received by the target) anytime and anywhere, either anonymously as indicated above (e.g., social media) or openly (e.g., work email, instant messaging, video conference) (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013). As indicated in the paragraph above, perpetrators may use a variety of social media technologies, including workplace email, to anonymously mass broadcast posts, comments or videos across agencies or within the public arena to distress the target and impact their reputation and/or career aspirations (Besley, 2009; Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006).

A further key point identified in this chapter the importance of the chain-of-command within traditional hierarchical organisations in fostering organisational culture (Lutgen-Sandvick & Tracey, 2012). This research found that face-to-face workplace bullying generally manifested as a consequences of:

(a) behavioural patterns between management and staff,

(b) relationship and power constructs between the perpetrator and target within the organisation's social construct or hierarchy,

(c) the perpetrator's organisationally accepted aggressive modus operandi,

(d) evolution between the behaviour's repetitiveness (or frequency) versus the extent during which the behaviour is experienced by the target, and

(e) organisational culture (e.g., explicit culture - legislation, policies and governance versus implicit culture - norms and "the way we do things around here") and levels of accepted aggressive behaviours particularly within the leadership ranks and general quality of leadership (Björkqvist, 1994).

These points help to further enliven the work environment for Australian public servants working in hierarchically-based government agencies. Indeed, when considering these elements within the context of the Australian public sector, it is beneficial to reiterate the points made in Chapter 1, that Australian public sector workplace legislation and policies that explicitly govern employee behaviour – generally referred to as a code of conduct or code of ethics - are currently in the nascent stage of defining and articulating workplace cyberbullying (see section 1.2.1). Given the relatively recent influx of internet enabled mobile smart devices (Mumtaz & Rodriguez, 2014) into government agencies, and more extensive usage by senior, middle and junior government employees, the potential for workplace cyberbullying to infect both work and private life has only increased (APSC, 2013b, 2013c).

In conclusion, this chapter confirmed that very little research has been conducted on the prevalence and impact of negative workplace cyber communication within Australian workplaces, and no known academic research has been conducted within the Australian public sector domain. This literature gap is significant, particularly given the Australian public sector represents 16% of this nation's workforce, or one out of six Australian workers employed nationally (ABS, 2014a, 2014b). This study is intended to provide insights into the prevalence and consequences across all Australian organisations, of particular interest is how Australian Commonwealth, State and Territory public sector employees perceive the effects of cyber technologies. This issue is particularly relevant in respect to how public servants perceive the impact of workplace cyberbullying on their work and private lives, job performance and satisfaction, stress levels, and their ability to retain their jobs. For clarity of argumentation, this thesis structure aligns this Review's thematic frames to the research questions and hypotheses; in this way RQ1 aligns to hypothesis 1 and the thematic rationale, and RQ2 with hypotheses 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides the rationale for the study's research design. Methodological and analytic approaches are explained, including why this research used sequential exploratory mixed methods approach across the qualitative and quantitative phases. The ensuing sections address the use of sequential exploratory mixed methodology within the research design. This chapter also includes a timeline together with the study's ethics and limitations.

As indicated in Chapter 2, the research reported in this thesis is the first known academic research of Australian public servants' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying. In this regard, the literature provided background into human aggression, face-to-face bullying and workplace offline bullying, cyberbullying and workplace cyberbullying within the context of the social psychological theoretical framework. Within the context of this research, social psychology was particularly germane given this theory regarded how people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours are influenced by the actual, imagined, or inferred presence of other human beings (Allport, 1954). In this regard, this research used SIP (Walther, 1992, 1996) to explain how self-select the type and method of their online communication and presentation (Walther, 2007), and interpret work cyber communications through the accepted code of conduct evidenced by their social group or organisation (Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998). CMC users are seen as developing professional work relationships within the context of what they perceive or interpret as acceptable group or organisational behaviours (Heinemann, 2011; Tidwell & Walther 2002; Walther et al., 2005).

The principle argument made by this research derives from, firstly, the dearth of literature or known academic research regarding the prevalence rates and consequences of workplace cyberbullying within an Australian workplace context, specifically the public sector. In this regard, the central focus of investigation was justified: What is the prevalence, and what are the consequences, of negative workplace cyber communication (i.e., cyberbullying) in the Australian public sector?

This fundamental theme subsequently shaped two research questions, both of which influence the research design, methodology and analysis processes. RQ1 examined public servants' perceptions regarding the prevalence rates of workplace cyberbullying, while RQ2 investigated public servants' perceptions about the consequences (i.e., workplace stress, job satisfaction and performance and efficacy of culture) of workplace cyberbullying. These two questions influenced the two qualitative studies and quantitative study. The Literature Review also forecast five hypotheses stemming from the two research questions, and formed the basis for Study 3:

1. Public servants perceive cyberbullying as manifesting in their workplaces (prevalence).
2. Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as correlated with increased levels of workplace stress (consequences).
3. Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as correlated with decreased overall work performance (consequences).
4. Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as correlated with decreased feelings of job satisfaction (consequences).
5. Workplace cyberbullying levels are correlated with employees' decreased perceptions of organisational cultural efficacy (consequences).

This research refers to workplace cyberbullying as online bullying or negative workplace cyber communications (given the latter term is more acceptable when in discussions across the public sectors). These terms and definitions for "workplace cyberbullying" were particularly employed during the face-to-face interviews on advice from public servants.

Chapter 3 includes this study's design, along with its methodological and analytic approaches and use of sequential exploratory mixed methods approach across two phases, expressed by two qualitative studies and a quantitative study. The researcher anticipated the rich information arising from the initial two rich qualitative studies would enhance the ensuing quantitative findings (Bergman, 2008, 2010, 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2011; Plano Clark, 2010). Chapter 3 thus comprises the following subsections; (a) methodology, (b) research design, (c) justification for mixed methods methodology, and (e) ethics and limitations.

Given the three studies conducted by this research were collected and analysed in accordance to each study's separate needs, and to facilitate the flow of ideas, Chapters 4, 5 and 6 provide the research collection, analysis and results specific to each study. In this regard, Study 1 (twenty-four face-to-face interviews) is discussed in Chapter 4, Study 2 (127 qualitative survey respondents) in Chapter 5, and Study 3 (463 quantitative survey respondents) in Chapter 6. The final chapter (Chapter 7) triangulates the key findings from the three studies.

3.1.1 Methodology

This large-scale research, comprising a total sample of over 600 participants, used SIP theory (Walther, 1992, 1996) founded on social psychological theoretical principles (Allport, 1954). Its purpose was to explore the perceptions of public sector employees as to the prevalence and consequences of workplace cyberbullying. In particular, it investigated employees' perceptions as to the impact of workplace cyberbullying on workplace stress, job satisfaction and performance, and efficacy of organisational processes in dealing with this phenomenon.

In the 1990s, Walther (1992, 1996) studied the implications of CMC within the context of social learning and how people use cyber platforms to learn, adapt, maintain and manage social inter-communication practices over time (Bandura, 1973). SIP theory thus subscribes to the notion that a work team develops a range of social interpersonal behaviours that individuals used to filter and interpret their environment (Heinemann, 2011; Tidwell & Walther 2002; Walther et al., 2005). In this sense, SIP posits the notion that employees' attitudes are both shaped by their work environment, and influence their CMC usage, online behaviours and workplace relationships (Walther & Burgoon, 1992).

3.1.2 Research Design

Figure 3.1 demonstrates the sequential exploratory mixed method design used in this research.

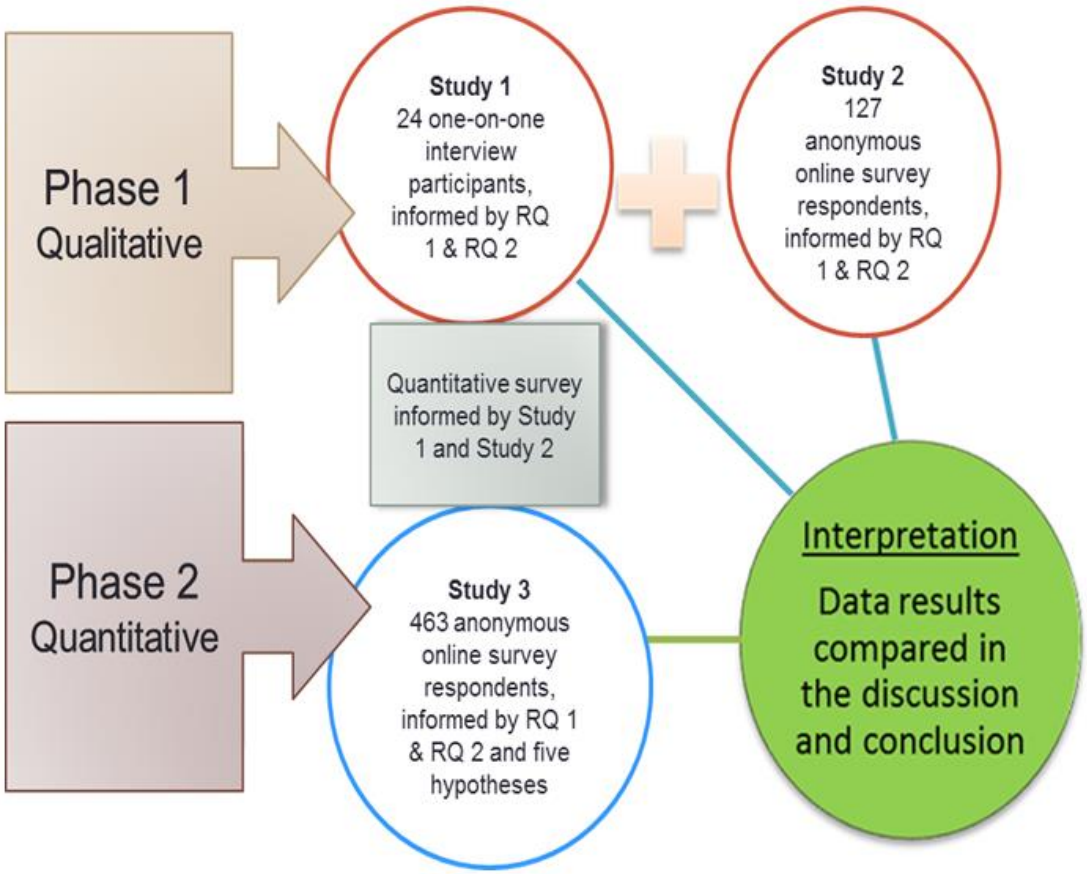


Figure 3.1. Sequential Exploratory Mixed Method Design (adapted from Creswell, 2012).

As shown in Figure 3.1, Phase 1 two qualitative studies (Study 1 and Study 2), with data collected and analysed sequentially across the period March 2013 – February 2014:

- Study 1 obtained qualitative data from a study of twenty-four semi-structured face-to-face interviews (March-September 2013), and
- Study 2 obtained qualitative data from 127 qualitative anonymous online survey respondents (October 2013-February 2014).

Phase 2 comprised a quantitative study, Study 3, which obtained quantitative data (March–July 2014), 463 quantitative anonymous online survey respondents. This data collection and analysis process represented a sequential journey, whereby

the interpretation of data from each study informed each subsequent study (Bergman, 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2011; Plano Clark, 2010).

Mixed-method research designs may often combine quantitative and qualitative approaches to collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data and are designed around (a) exploratory, (b) description, (c) explanation, (d) prediction, and/or (e) influence focused research (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Sutton, 2006; Plano Clark, 2010). An inductive method was used to explore the phenomenon "workplace cyberbullying" and to address the two research questions and five hypotheses described in section 3.1.1.

RQ1 and RQ2 addressed whether (1) Australian public sector employees perceived negative cyber communications - workplace cyberbullying - as occurring within their workplaces, and (2) how such behaviour affected their workplace stress, job satisfaction and performance, and effectiveness of organisational culture in dealing with the phenomenon. Given the dearth of literature by which to assess the predisposing perceptions of public sector employees in this regard, a sequential design was used to test the researcher's questions. The sequential exploratory mixed methods design provided the researcher with the opportunity to use previously developed and tested instruments (Coyne et al., In press; Cunny & Perri, 1991; Muchinsky, 1976; Loo, 2002; Nagy, 2002) across a large sampling frame of nationally-based public servants. This sample size assisted in reducing selection bias, and can be particularly effective for studies designed to enhance response rates (Brooks-Gunn, Berlin, Leventhal, & Fuligni, 2000).

It was anticipated a number of new insights would emerge as each study progressed that findings from Study 1's face-to-face interviews would inform Study 2's qualitative online survey, and Study 3's quantitative online survey (Bergman, 2008, 2010, 2011). This technique was advocated by Bergman (2008, 2010, 2011) and was surprisingly effective, as findings from Phase 1's studies were interpreted using the process of data comparison, discussion and conclusion to substantiate key themes, which then influenced Phase 2's quantitative survey instruments. This mixed-method design thus generated a fulsome understanding of the incidence and consequences of workplace cyberbullying as perceived by public sector employees.

3.1.3 Justification of mixed method methodology

The researcher's use of sequential mixed method research was influenced by a number of factors expressed by Bergman (2008, 2010, 2011) and Plano Clark (2010). Both Bergman and Plano Clark support the usefulness of combining qualitative and quantitative research methodologies to enrich and strengthen empirical quantitative data with the rich qualitative information. Phase 1's qualitative data informed and explored the underlying meanings relating to Phase 2's quantitative data (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

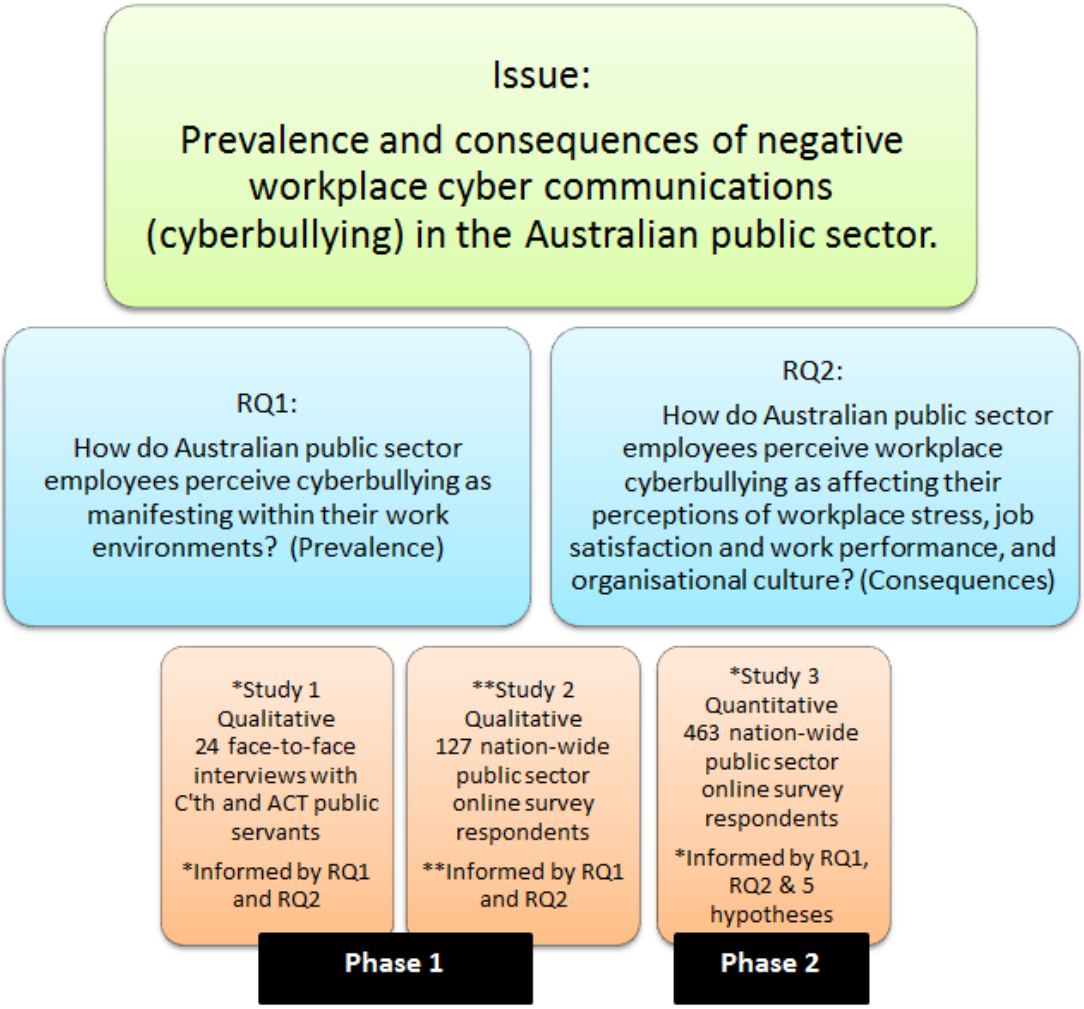


Figure 3.2. Two-phased mixed methods research design (adapted from Creswell, 2012).

As depicted in Figure 3.2, the overarching focusing "issue" and two research questions guided both phases of this research, where Phase 1 comprised Study 1 and Study 2, and Phase 2 encompassed Study3. The quantitative study was also influenced by five hypotheses. In this instance, this research firstly investigated a reasonably small population of twenty-four interviewees to explore the meanings,

perceptions and attributes of participants' lived experiences to gain a sense of the phenomenon under investigation (Bergman, 2011; Plano Clark, 2010). Insights gained from these interviewees provided the researcher with the confidence to develop and disseminate the nationally-based qualitative survey, and data from both qualitative data sets influenced the quantitative survey's development.

This design afforded a participant enrichment process to augment and improve the overall sample (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Sutton, 2006). Collins et al. (2006) noted that participant enrichment "represents the mixing of quantitative and qualitative techniques for the rationale of optimizing the sample" (p. 76), such as increasing the number of participants. This enrichment process was conducted with the intention of triangulating and corroborating the mixed findings to assess the same conceptual phenomenon (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). Greene et al., (1989) observed that "the core premise of triangulation as a design strategy is that all methods have inherent biases and limitations, ….However, when two or more methods that have offsetting biases are used to assess a given phenomenon, and the results of these methods converge or corroborate one another, then the validity of inquiry findings is enhanced" (p. 256). Furthermore, while recognising the different epistemological positions, the cumulative strengths of this mixed methods research paradigm provided the potential to form unique insights (Adamson, 2005; Bergman, 2008, 2010, 2011; Plano Clark, 2010). In this respect, the mixed methods research provided a pragmatic approach by which to conduct exploratory research (Collins et al., 2006). In this regard, it enabled the exploration of a reasonably new workplace phenomenon about which relatively little is known.

Various guidelines provide rigorous qualitative data collection and analysis procedures and methodologies to ensure a reasonable degree of data validity (Bergman, 2008, 2010, 2011). In this research, the two qualitative studies were undertaken in accordance with the guidelines recommended by Bergman (2008, 2010, 2011) and Plano Clark (2010), which encompass sampling, data collection and data management processes, description of an analytic framework, as well as findings and discussion. This data was then correlated to, and contrasted against, the quantitative data, which focused on a larger population. Study 3's quantitative data explored the phenomenon through exploratory factor analysis using multivariate statistical analysis (Field, 2013). This process addressed assisted in addressing SIP

theory (Walther, 1992, 1996), and allow the empirical evidence to be generalised across a larger population (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, 2012), such as the Australian workforce.

In summary, this mixed-method research ensured the phenomenon was analysed using various sources and viewpoints (face-to-face interviews, qualitative and quantitative surveys across a nationally-based sample). This design and methodology subsequently enhanced the researcher's ability to measure, triangulate and interpret the findings. The results were then discussed to examine the value and strengths made by each data-collection method, and final conclusions.

3.1.4 Ethics

Approval from QUT's University Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC) was obtained prior to each study. International permission was gained prior to the use of internationally-sourced instruments as required (Appendix F).

In the interests of transparency, the researcher acknowledges her personal motivations for conducting this research. The researcher has witnessed various forms of workplace bullying, including workplace cyberbullying. Her background encompasses analysis, business and risk management, human resources and domestic/international liaison, and policy development and program delivery across a number of Australian government agencies during a 23 year career. Her public sector experience includes both Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory departments and portfolio agencies.

Prior to disseminating the questionnaire across the Australian public sector, the researcher formally gained the public sector union's written approval to use their website to promulgate the researcher's invitation to public servants. This invitation invited union members (nationally-based public servants) to participate in Study 3's quantitative anonymous online survey. The sensitive and often ambiguous nature of workplace bullying constituted a potential research challenge (Lewis, 2006). Due to the sensitive and subjective nature of this study, participants' names, contact details, agency titles and any other identifying material was removed and replaced with numerical substitutes (Creswell, 2012; Punch, 2005). Any identifying information were destroyed from the collection material prior to the thesis being tabled before the Examination Board.

Prior to any collection phase, each participant was invited to physically or electronically sign a consent form. These forms encompassed the governing principles of confidentiality as stipulated by the UHREC. This form enabled participants to withdraw their comments at any stage.

In the event participants became emotionally affected as a consequence of conducting the interviews or online survey, each tool incorporated written guidance to contact the public sector Employee Assistance Program service or Australia's Life Line. This point was reiterated by the researcher at the start and conclusion of each face-to-face interview. All interview participants were advised to pause, discontinue or remove themselves from any discussions that caused them distress. Overall, this risk was rated as low by the UHREC.

3.1.5 Limitations

A number of key limitations were considered and have been discussed in this section. The first key limitation pertained to the theoretical framework. In this regard, SIP theory (Walther, 1992, 1996) pertains to workplace relationships conducted across CMC technologies. While this element is a strength for the research conducted within this dissertation, other research may find it a limitation given it does not describe how, or why, a face-to-face bully transforms into an online bully at work, or vice versa.

Another limitation regarded participants' access to the two online surveys and whether it was promulgated in a democratic manner. All nationally-based Australian public sector employees were offered the opportunity to participate in the survey as the surveys were widely promulgated across public sector-specific electronic newsletters, email groups and websites, and local and national newspapers. However, it is understood that certain minority groups, such as people with disabilities such as the vision impaired, may be unable to access this visual survey. In these instances the affected participant/s were unlikely to conduct the online survey without their carers' assistance and as this demographic was not the primary focus of this research, this limitation was deemed low.

Methodological limitations varied. One methodological limitation pertained to the inherent complexities associated with comparing domestic and international workplace bullying studies and literature reviews whereby each study employed

various research methodologies and immersed across different cultures, both in terms of nationality and type of organisation (i.e., government versus non-government organisations). A second methodological limitation arose from the potential complexities often enumerated against mixed methods research, particularly regarding balancing the differences between the qualitative and quantitative sample sizes, and interpretation thereof (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The researcher was aware of the need to account for, and balance, the different data sets to mitigate the potential for skewed results. Skew, arising from participants' inherent bias and subjectivity regarding the subject matter, and potential inability to differentiate bullying or cyberbullying from other negative workplace behaviours (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007), was also a limitation. While a workplace cyberbullying definition was provided within each of the three studies, the researcher cannot be sure as to the participants' comprehension in this regard, however these represent common methodological limitations in workplace bullying and cyberbullying research.

The sample size in the quantitative research was sufficiently large and included nationally-based and diverse levels, ages and roles. This diversity allowed comparisons regarding employees' perceptions as to the prevalence and consequences between similar workforce populations. However, the snowball sampling method used to collect participants constituted a potential limitation given the tendency to attract participants who self-reported as targets of workplace cyberbullying, thus potentially decreasing confidence in the sample's validity (Coyne et al., 2000). However, self-report approaches are generally common in research into traditional forms of covert workplace bullying, simply because targets' perceptions of the behaviours are more likely to be reported (Spector, 2006).

Given the lack of an existing workplace cyberbullying measure, this research used the modified 19-item Cyber Negative Acts Questionnaire (NAQ) instrument first developed and tested for UK based workplace cyberbullying research (Coyne et al., In press), and based on the reliable and validated workplace bullying behavioural inventory, entitled the NAQ-Revised (Einarsen et al., 2009). Further detail justifying the use of this instrument in provided in 6.3.5. In brief, this instrument was used due to three key reasons, firstly, that workplace cyberbullying and traditional face-to-face workplace bullying are conceptually similar (Coyne et al., In press; Smith et al.,

2008). Secondly, that existing research has used this approach to compensate for the lack of an existing workplace cyberbullying measure (Privitera & Campbell, 2009; Giumetti et al., 2012), and thirdly, that current traditional face-to-face workplace measures are too narrow in scope to assess the nature of workplace cyberbullying (i.e., bullying using technology) (Coyne et al., In press). However, the researcher acknowledges that future research will likely benefit from a specific workplace cyberbullying instrument, currently being developed by the UK (Farley et al., 2013).

Time is also a factor particularly given the rapid change cyber technologies are transforming people lives. Future studies into negative workplace cyber communication will be increasingly complex due to the rapidly changing technology and usage, and will undoubtedly result in new methods by which perpetrators will instigate workplace cyberbullying (Borstorff et al., 2007; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Privitera & Campbell, 2009).

This research investigated public sector employees' perceptions regarding the prevalence and impact of workplace cyberbullying. As a consequence while this research collected substantial information from the qualitative data regarding employees' perceptions as to the different effects on targets/victims and observers, it did not ask participants to self-identify as targets or perpetrators. However, given this research was aimed to firstly identify whether Australian public sector employees perceived workplace cyberbullying as prevalent and resulting consequences, this lack of segregation was deemed a moderate limitation for this study.

The behavioural-approach survey used in the Study 3 used a six-month criterion of exposure to workplace bullying. While this process provided participants with a defined period in which to consider their responses, Nielson et al. (2010) found that this method can result in an over or under estimating prevalence rates. However, given the paucity of workplace cyberbullying studies in Australian public sector contexts by which to compare the results of this research, it is unknown whether this risk mitigation process was fully effective in containing prevalence rate over or under estimations. In this instance, a lower prevalence rate may have been observed due the inclusion of workplace cyberbullying definitions within each study, and the type of volunteer respondents. As a result, the specific effect of workplace cyberbullying on organisational observers or external clientele was not considered.

A combination of survey fatigue and technological failure was possibly perceived in this study given a small number of questionnaires were found to be substantially incomplete and had to be removed from the final survey count of 463. In discussing the issue with QUT IT staff, the researcher was advised that the university's survey instrument required participants to use a current browser otherwise the survey may take longer to upload and/or freeze partway through completion. Given the number and geographic diversity of nationally-based public servants, this limitation was deemed moderate.

In conclusion, given the potential sensitivities regarding the term "bully" or "bullying" particularly for public servants who were interviewed, the researcher used the term "negative workplace cyber communications" in response to advice provided by a senior public servant. This option was implemented to mitigate participants' concerns regarding the interview questions (Cooper & Hoel, 2000). This was particularly relevant for those Australian public sector employees immediately dealing with the negative effects of a rapidly shrinking public sector organisations. A workplace cyberbullying definition was included in the interview questionnaire to ensure all participants were fully informed of the phenomenon's definition for this study.

3.2 CONCLUSION

As noted, this research is the first to examine Australian government employees' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying on their workplaces, its impact on workplace stress, job satisfaction and performance, and efficacy of public sector organisational culture in dealing with the phenomenon. Chapter 3 presented the study's design, along with its methodological and analytic approaches. These approaches guided the data collection and analysis approach, shaped in response to the focus question. This research used SIP theory (Walther, 1992, 1996), within the context of the social psychology theoretical framework, to examine this phenomenon. This research was facilitated by the core theme: What is the prevalence, and what are the consequences, of negative workplace cyber communication (cyberbullying) in the Australian public sector*?* Using a sequential exploratory mixed methods approach, two research questions stemmed from this core question and guided the two qualitative studies underpinning Phase 1, and the quantitative study comprising Study 3 underpinning Phase 2. Both research questions

shaped the five hypotheses, the first of which related to prevalence rates (RQ1), and the last four concerned the consequences (RQ2) of workplace cyberbullying (i.e., workplace stress, job satisfaction and performance, and cultural efficacy).

Phase 1's two qualitative studies encompassed (a) Study 1: twenty-four face-to-face interviews, and (b) Study 2: 127 qualitative anonymous online survey participants, both of which addressed the research questions. Phase 2's study, entitled Study 3: Quantitative survey, comprised 463 survey responses. Study 3's survey instruments arose as a consequence of the Literature Review, thematic analysis of Phase 1's two studies, and international collaboration. Ethical approval was obtained prior to administering each study.

The chapters that follow include the collection methodology, analysis, and findings provided from Study 1 (Chapter 4), Study 2 (Chapter 5), and Study 3 (Chapter 6). The discussion and conclusion chapter, Chapter 7, provides a detailed discussion encompassing a triangulation of the three studies' empirical evidence. The conclusion statement culminates in the researcher's thoughts for future research.

Chapter 4: Study One: Face-to-Face Interviews

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated in Chapter 3, the purpose of this two-phased exploratory mixed methods research was to explore Australian public servants' perceptions about the prevalence rates and consequences of workplace cyberbullying on their workplace stress, job satisfaction, job performance, and organisational culture. Using social psychological theoretical principles, SIP theory (Walther, 1992, 1996) was used to investigate how people's thoughts, feelings and behaviours conveyed across workplace cyber technologies are influenced by the actual or implied presence of other human beings (Allport, 1954) within their organisational culture.

This chapter covers the collection methodology, analysis, and findings arising from Study 1's twenty-four face-to-face interviews. A comprehensive discussion of these findings are provided in Chapter 7, which are triangulated with the findings arising from Studies 2 and 3. Study 1 was developed in response to the core investigative theme: What is the prevalence, and what are the consequences, of negative workplace cyber communication (cyberbullying) in the Australian public sector? This focusing theme shaped two research questions, both of which influenced Study 1's methodology and design. RQ1 regarded public servants' perceptions about workplace cyberbullying prevalence rates, while RQ2 examined perceptions concerning the impact on workplace stress levels, job satisfaction and performance, and organisational culture. Regarding the element of organisational culture, this study investigated employees' perceptions into the efficacy of organisational culture in supporting public servants in dealing with workplace cyberbullying events. Both RQs shaped and guided the two qualitative and quantitative studies.

A lexical software tool, Leximancer Version 4.0 (Smith, 2011), was used to conduct Study 1's thematic analysis and to develop Phase 1's qualitative themes and concepts. The researcher refined the transcribed material by identifying, firstly, if each quote was lexically linked to a key theme or concept, and secondly, how illustrative quotes exemplified a theme or concept.

In conclusion, this chapter concerns the collection, analysis, results and findings attributed to Study 1's transcribed material gathered from twenty-four face-to-face interviews. The five main sections comprising this chapter are structured as, (a) participants, (b) procedure – collection methods and justification, (c) analysis, (d) results, and (e) conclusion. An extensive discussion of Study 1's empirical results is provided in the concluding chapter (Chapter 7).

4.2 PARTICIPANTS

Study 1's convenience sample comprised twenty-four public servants taken from ACT and Commonwealth public services who were interviewed from March to May 2013. A snowball sampling method was used to inform participants of the research, where the researcher invited volunteers via email or used contacts provided from work colleagues or participants (Punch, 2005). Prior to each interview, a UHREC approved consent form was signed by individual participants and the researcher prior to each interview (Appendix A). The next subsection details participant characteristics

4.2.1 Participant Characteristics

Study 1 comprised twenty-four face-to-face public sector interviewees divided between males (12, 50%) and females (12, 50%) (See Table 4.1, p. 118). Over half of the participants were aged between 31-50 years, with the majority (19) represented by middle to senior management and members of the executive (Executive Level 1-2, Senior Executive Service 1-3 and Agency Heads) together with five staff (APS Level 1-6).

Table 4.1.

Descriptive statistics of Study 1's interviewed participants

Characteristic	Group	*Frequency*	*%*
Gender			
	Male	12	50%
	Female	12	50%
Age (Years)			
	21-30	4	16.6%
	31-40	12	50%
	41-50	4	16.6%
	51-60	4	16.6%
Work role			
	CEO, Executive, Managers (non-staff)	19	79.16%
	APS 1 – 6 (staff)	5	20.8%

4.3 PROCEDURE

This section and following subsections details the collection method used for Study 1. Two subsections included under Procedure encompass, firstly, the collection method, and secondly, justification and how the interviews were administered. Two sections follow on from the procedure section; these are entitled analysis (4.4) and results (4.5). Both sections encompass the introductory and in-depth process by which the analysis was approached and conducted.

4.3.1 Collection method

Phase 1 of this research comprised two qualitative studies comprising Study 1's face-to-face interviews and Study 2's qualitative online survey. Both qualitative studies addressed the research questions driving this thesis and influenced the collection methodology the two research questions:

RQ1. How do Australian public sector employees perceive cyberbullying as manifesting within Australian public sector work environments? (prevalence, RQ1), and

RQ2. How do Australian public sector employees perceive workplace cyberbullying as affecting their workplace stress, job satisfaction, work performance, and organisational culture? (consequences, RQ2).

4.3.2 Justification and administration

This first study was conducted from March to May in 2013 across a self-selected convenience sampling frame of public servants working within the Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory public services. A snowball method was used (Punch, 2005), and participants' employment demographics ranged from CEOs, executives, middle to senior management, and staff ranging from team supervisors and junior staff working as full-time, part-time or contractors across a variety of delivery and policy agencies. Punch (2005) observed that one-on-one interviews are particularly valuable when gathering qualitative research data on phenomena about which little is known. Consequently, the researcher gained an in-depth insights from the very people who were living the paradigm, and developed an understanding of participants' perspectives around organisational culture (Parzefall & Salin, 2010).

In this regard, semi-structured interviews were used to explore this sensitive issue where participants were more comfortable espousing their opinions confidentially with the researcher, rather than in the middle of an open floor with other staff listening (Creswell, 2012; Punch, 2005). The semi-structured list of questions (Appendix B) embraced a series of semi-structured open-ended questions that were developed from the Literature Review and designed to engage the participants (Punch, 2005). The researcher, as interviewer, was able to diverge from the guide if the interviewee provided a new response or raised new issues.

Prior to each interview, each interviewee was emailed a QUT consent form (approved by the UHREC) to sign, which was then signed by the interviewer on the day of the meeting. Consent included the participant's permission to record the interview. The interview questions (Appendix B) was provided to each participant prior to each meeting. On transcribing each interview, the researcher emailed the

draft transcripts to each participant to ensure each transcription accurately reflected their individual responses.

4.4 ANALYSIS

This section and the subsections below detail the analysis approach and method used for Study 1. These interviews were conducted with a diverse range of Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory public servants ranging from staff to members of the executive, including heads of agency. Phase 1's data analysis used a lexical data mining tool, Leximancer (Smith, 2011). This tool was used to analyse the qualitative data gained from Phase 1's two qualitative studies. Ensuing subsections encompass (a) aim, (b) lexical analysis software, (c) developing codes and themes, and (d) validity and reliability. These subsections incorporate an introduction into the overarching thematic analysis process. An extensive discussion of Study 1's results is provided under section 4.5.

4.4.1 Analysis Approach and Method

The subsections below (entitled aim, lexical analysis software and so on) detail the analysis approach and method used for the Study 1's face-to-face interviews. In brief, the analysis of the qualitative data obtained from Study 1 was thematically analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006) using a lexical data mining tool, Leximancer (Smith, 2011), developed by Queensland University (Smith, 2003, 2011; Smith & Humphreys, 2006). The researcher used the lexical data mining tool to progress through the six phases of thematic analysis, which Braun and Clark (2006) described as (1) familiarisation of the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing a report. Given the large amount of material provided by the survey respondents, the researcher focused on the more perceptive extracts and quotes to illustrate and clarify upon each theme and concept. The researcher's rationale used in refining the number of excerpts used pertained to whether a quote was lexically linked to the relevant theme or concept being discussed, and each quote's informative capacity to illustrate a particular concept or theme.

Aim

The aim of Study 1's twenty-four face-to-face interviews was answer the two research questions focusing this research regarding the prevalence rates (RQ1) and

consequences (RQ2) of workplace cyberbullying as perceived by local, State, Territory and Commonwealth public servants. RQ2 related to employees perceptions of four possible workplace cyberbullying consequences, including work stress, job satisfaction, job performance and organisational culture.

Using the lens of social psychological theory, Walther's (1994, 1996) SIP theory advanced the framework by which Phase 1's findings were interpreted. Within this context, public servants were asked a range of questions during the face-to-face interviews (Appendix B). These were aimed at determining the type of cyber platforms most commonly perceived as conveying cyberbullying. Other questions determined employees' perceptions as to whether the absence of online social cues across professional text-based cyber communications were interpreted within the context of accepted organisational codes of conduct (culture) and could result in miscommunications (Walther et al., 2005).

As indicated in the Literature Review, numerous studies into schoolyard and youth face-to-face and cyberbullying have been conducted (Beran & Li, 2005; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006, 2011, 2012). In this regard, findings from these studies indicate traditional face-to-face bullying a strong predictor of cyberbullying (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). Within this context, public sector employment agencies (APSC, 2011; Comcare, 2012, 2014a, 2014b) annually release whole-of-public sector and employee health reports that consistently find traditional face-to-face workplace bullying behaviour as prevalent. Given these consistent indicators, together with juvenile/youth studies signifying face-to-face bullying a key predictor of cyberbullying, the researcher anticipated this first exploratory study would quickly identify employees' perceptions regarding this phenomenon.

Lexical Analysis Software

The interview transcripts developed from the twenty-four interviews were analysed using the Leximancer Version 4.0 (Smith, 2011). This software platform constitutes a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) package comprising a sophisticated computer-aided text analysis (CATA) capability that provides automated analysis based on the properties of text (Penn-Edwards, 2010; Smith, 2003, 2011). The text mining Leximancer computer software was chosen for Phase 1's two qualitative studies (face-to-face interviews and anonymous online survey). This software has been used both internationally and domestically as a

lexicographic software (Cretchley, Rooney, & Gallois, 2010; Crofts & Bisman, 2010; Grimbeek, Bartlett, & Loke, 2004; Kucita, Kivunja, Maxwell, & Kuyini, 2013; Kivunja, 2013; Penn-Edwards, 2010; Scott, Pachana, & Sofronoff, 2011). In this regard, Leximancer offered the researcher with an autotomized, replicable, transparent, and reliable method of sorting and coding the two studies' texts into inductively extracted concepts and themes (Penn-Edwards, 2010).

Furthermore, Leximancer (Smith, 2011) has been widely used for social and cultural studies (political analysis via social media), academic qualitative data analysis within public and private organisational environments, and research on education (Grimbeek et al., 2004; Kivunja, 2013). The computer aided lexical software analysis platform has also has been employed in support to explanatory and predictive research, and in studying interpretive and critical constructs (Parsons, 2008). For example, Grimbeek et al. (2004) employed Leximancer (Smith, 2011) to automatically transcribe the interview data for assessments, motivation, interest levels of individual students within a two-dimensional spatial representation.

Leximancer (Smith, 2011) represents a valid domestic and international investigative tool that has been used in the field of phenomenography (Penn-Edwards, 2010).

Phenomenographic data analysis is generally an iterative and comparative manual process involving the sorting and coding of transcripts into concepts, categories and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The outcomes of this process are "used as an *instrument for description* of the way people think in concrete situations and, from the collective perspective, it can be seen as a *description* of thinking" and represent a "collective intellect" (Marton, 1981, p. 198). In this way, a manually developed relational map is developed to display people's collective thinking as concepts and themes, and how these relate to one another. While this coding process enables the researcher to become familiar with the data, it is often time consuming and can be influenced by the researcher's unconscious beliefs and attitudes and thus introduce unwanted or unwarranted coding distortions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, the amount of transcribed data generated by lengthy and/or multiple interviews can sometimes be overwhelming, particularly for researchers studying a sensitive phenomenon.

In this regard, Penn-Edwards (2010) found Leximancer (Smith, 2011) efficacious in conductive fast, exploratory research, as the data is automatically analysed without the possibility of researcher bias, and assists in identifying " a broader span of syntactic properties, increase[s] reliability, and facilitate[s] reproducibility" (p. 252). Secondly, this research used Leximancer instead of, for example, the NVivo analysis software due to its capacity to provide purely objective and "hands-off" analysis (Penn-Edwards, 2010). This factor was considered favourably in comparing other computer aided lexical software such as, for example, the NVivo software. Wong (2008) notes that the NVivo software requires the researcher to step through a number of "decision junctures", such as how information is coded, thus increasing the potential for skewed or biased research outcomes. Given the researcher's concerns that her public sector experience would bias the research, the two reasons articulated above justified the use of Leximancer (Penn-Edwards, 2010; Smith & Humphreys, 2006).

Developing codes and themes

This research analysed the transcribed data through a two-pronged and sequential semantic and relational process. The researcher used a series of software code to inductively identify static and fluctuating contextual words co-located within transcribed material (Penn-Edwards, 2010; Smith, 2011; Smith & Humphreys, 2006). These co-located words are automatically generated into thematic and relational-semantic associations. This process is illustrated in Figure 4.1 (p. 124).

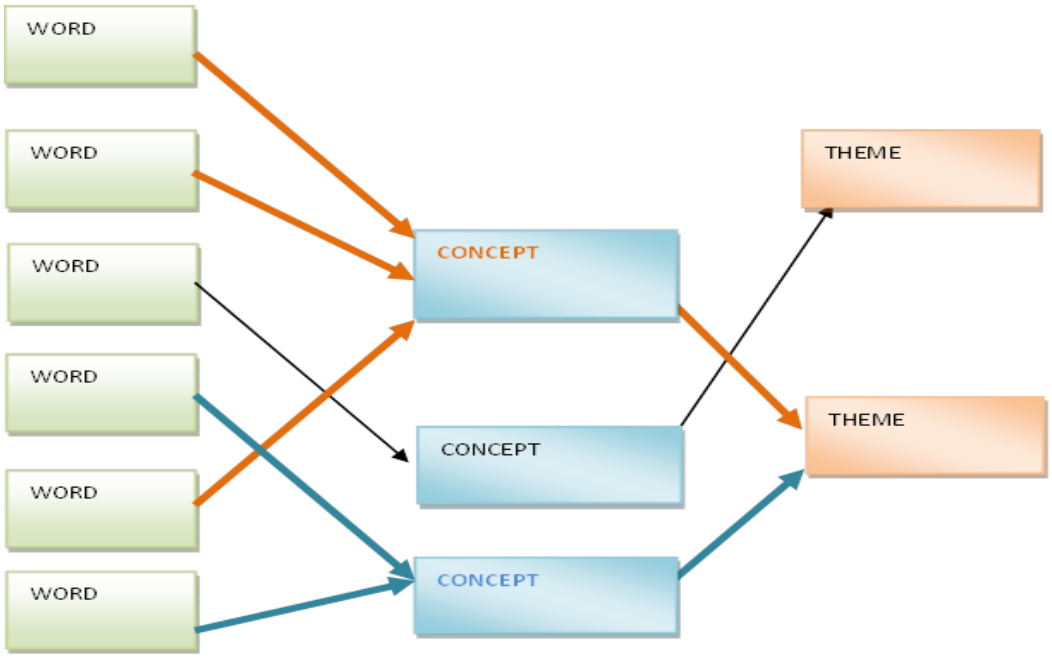


Figure 4.1. How Leximancer lexically develops thematic and relational-semantic associations.

Figure 4.2 illustrates the visual display generated, together with a thematic summary and transcribed text justifying each them.

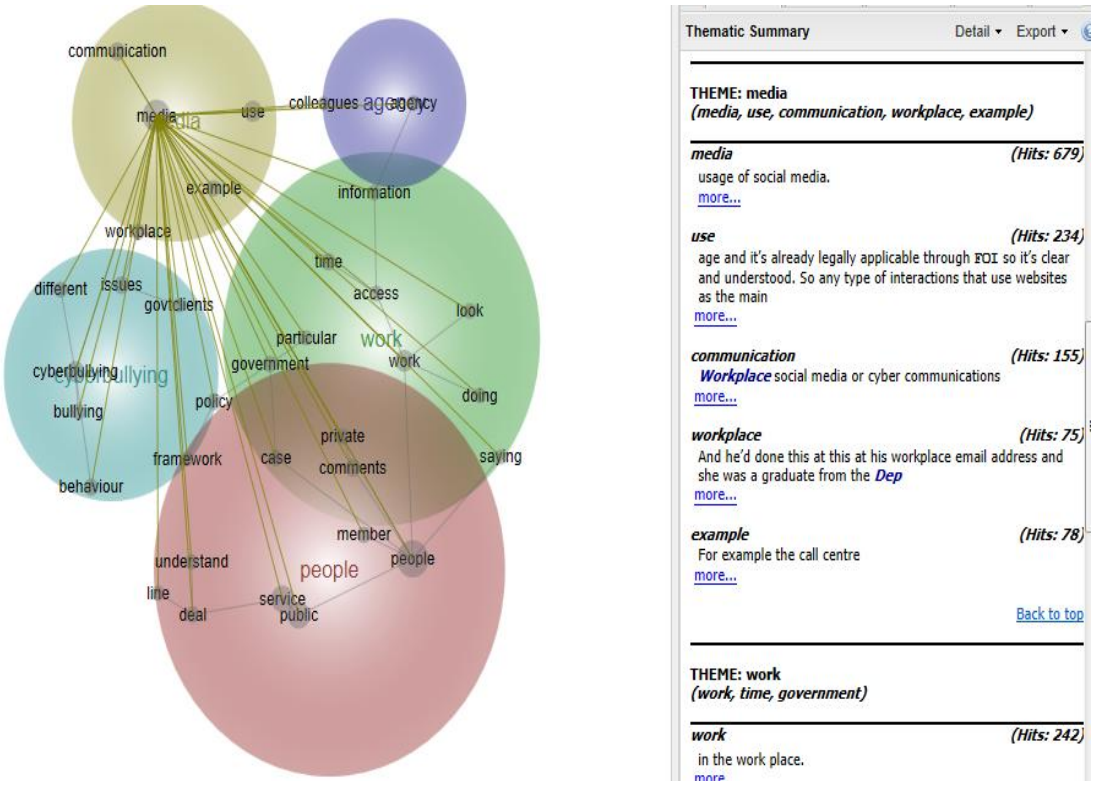


Figure 4.2. Concept cloud representing lexically generated themes and concepts from Study 1.

This display shows a software generated thematic map (coloured circles) with supporting text (in black text). Each theme is depicted as overlapping heat-sourced circles, where each theme's position is dependent on the degree of thematic co-occurrence within context to the other themes (Smith, 2003, 2011). Intersecting themes indicate a greater thematic co-occurrence than those placed further apart. Themes are developed through the automatic grouping of "like" concepts, and concepts are developed by grouping "like" or "clustered" seed words (Penn-Edwards, 2010; Smith, 2003, 2011; Smith & Humphreys, 2006).

In this manner, thematic outputs are grounded in the text-based data. According to the Leximancer Manual Version 4 (Smith, 2011) this software provides,

> a text analytics tool that can be used to analyse the content of collections of textual documents and to display the extracted information visually [where] information is displayed by means of a conceptual map that provides a bird's eye view of the material, representing the main concepts contained within the text as well as information about how they are related.
>
> (Smith, 2011, pp. 4-5)

In this research, Leximancer (Smith, 2011) was used to interact and explore the two qualitative studies text-based conceptual structures, and use the rich data to validate each underlying concept and overarching theme (Penn-Edwards, 2010). The themes and concepts illustrated respondents' perceptions as to the prevalence rates and consequences of workplace cyberbullying in the Australian public sector.

Validity and reliability

Four validity parameters were used to validate Leximancer's (Smith, 2011) analysis; these aligned to Krippendorff's (2004) four validation dimensions of stability, reproducibility, correlative, and functional validity. These four dimensions include; (1) stability pertained to sampling validity for members, (2) reproducibility regarded the sampling validity of representatives, predictive validity, and structural validity for concept network comparisons, (3) correlative validity involved semantic validity, and (4) functional validity of the software code (Grech, Horberry, & Smith, 2002). Grech, Horberry, and Smith (2002) found Leximancer's parametric validity was particularly strong compared to manual content analysis methods, while elements of this software tool have been found to be statistically comparable. In

considering Leximancer's reliability, reproducibility and validity against Krippendorff's (2004) four validation dimensions, Smith and Humphrey (2006) compared the software's content analysis and coding and found that Leximancer offered greater certainty (Krippendorff, 2004) than manual keyword indexing (Smith, 2003, 2011).

A limitation of the software is that, due to the developer's copy write and intellectual property, users are unable to interrogate the back-end algorithms that process the text and analyse the transcribed material.

4.5 RESULTS

The sections above provided the collection and analysis methodology for Study 1's transcribed data. While the collection step was crucial in obtaining the data, the findings found in this Results section were critical in identifying evidence addressing the focus and two research questions guiding this research. Study 1's interview data was thematically analysed using the lexical software tool, Leximancer (Smith, 2011). Five themes were identified from this analysis, all of which related to RQ1 (workplace cyberbullying prevalence) and RQ2 (workplace cyberbullying consequences). Consequently, the ensuing subsections include (a) introduction, (b) thematic analysis procedure, (c) introduction to Study 1's face-to-face interviews, (d) thematic summary, (e) theme one: people, (f) theme two: media, (g), theme three: work, (f) theme four: cyberbullying, and (g) theme five: agency. A short conclusion is provided under section 4.6, while a full discussion and conclusion is provided in Chapter 7.

4.5.1 Introduction

To reiterate, Study 1 was conducted to address the key research focus theme and two research questions. This study interchangeably used the terms "workplace cyberbullying" and "negative workplace cyber communications" as the researcher received guidance from a senior public servant that the term "negative workplace cyber communications" was better than the term "bully", given the perceived sensitivities of the latter. Finally, "workplace cyberbullying" was also referred to as "online workplace bullying," while "traditional face-to-face bullying" was referred to as "offline workplace bullying". This section comprises Study 1's transcribed results,

analysis and findings. The ensuing five themes and underlying concepts address the two research questions.

4.5.2 Thematic analysis: Procedure

Figure 4.3 illustrates the seven steps by which the software generates the final concept and thematic lists from the raw, transcribed text.

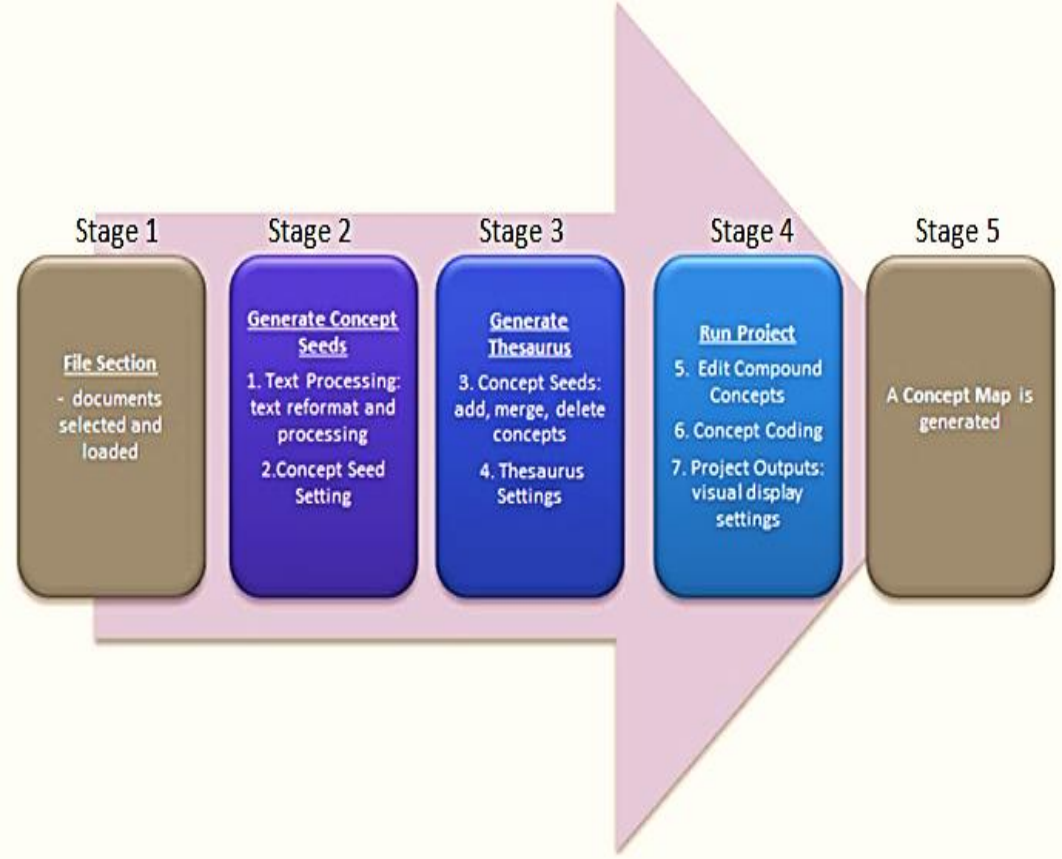


Figure 4.3. Representation of the seven Leximancer process steps and five stages.

To achieve this result, the software prompts the user through seven steps that automatically results in word lists or "seed" words (Penn-Edwards, 2010; Smith, 2003, 2011; Smith & Humphreys, 2006). These word lists are grouped into a series of concepts that are used to form a thesaurus and shape a short list of overarching themes. Themes and concepts are clustered in terms of their lexical inter-relationship to each another. These seven automatic steps were embedded within five overarching stages including; (1) saving the transcribe material to file, (2) generating concept seeds by text formatting and word/seed setting, (3) generating a thesaurus to add, merge, delete words to create concept, (4) run the project by compounding the

concepts into overarching themes, and (5) generate a map to show key themes and concepts.

Stage 1. File Section: the researcher uploaded and saved the transcribed material and survey data under two project headings "Interview data" and "Survey data" respectively.

Stage 2. Generate Concept Seeds. The researcher generated a suite of concept seeds or synonyms taken from the Study 1 face-to-face and Study 2 qualitative survey data sets. This process reformatted the text-based reference material and segregated the words and free text provided in the transcripts and spreadsheets. The researcher enabled the Merge Word Variants and Apply Folder Tags option to identify and group "like" words such as (for example only) *look, looking, looks, looked* under the single concept word, "look" to de-clutter the final concept map from non-critical concepts. Under the Concept Seed Setting or Processing option, the lexical software automatically grouped key seed words from within the reformatted text.

According to the Leximancer Manual Version 4.0 (Smith, 2011), seed words are developed from either a single or list of correlated words that group around a central synonym (the seed word "baby," for example, can include the terms "babies," "born," "parents"). Each data set will develop a unique list of seed words. Leximancer automatically drills for these words within each sentence and if enough of these seed words and synonyms are linked, a concept is developed. A group of like concepts then form into themes.

Stage 3. Generate Thesaurus: Figure 4.4 shows the five key themes and high-level concepts generated from Study 1's transcribed data.

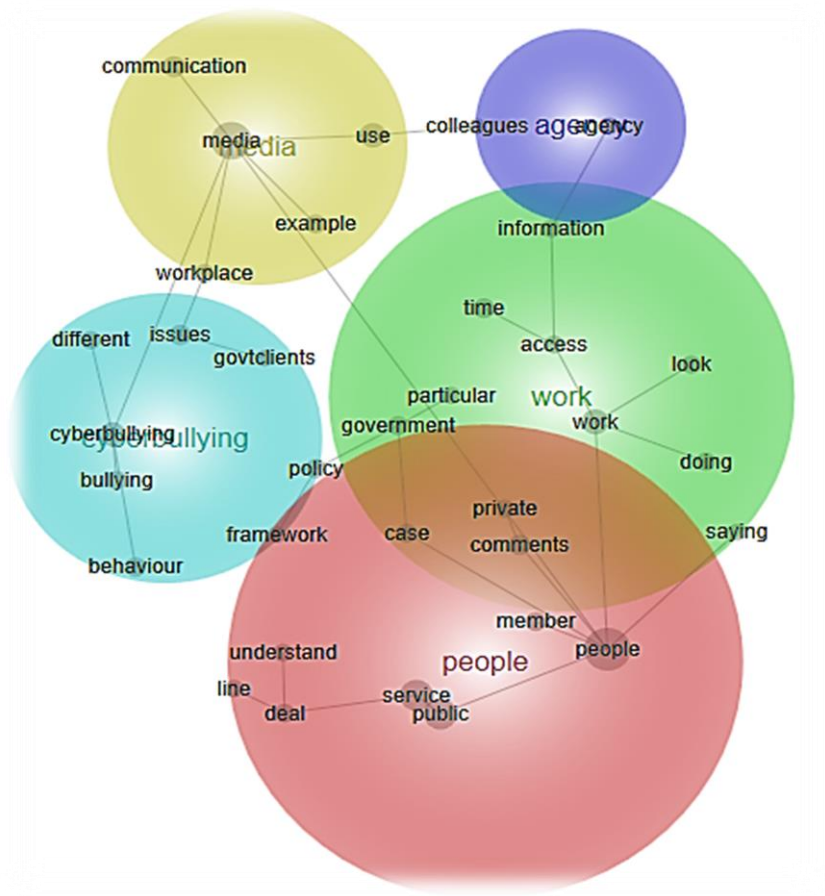


Figure 4.4. An example of a Leximancer concept map: Study 1's lexically analysed data.

In Stage 3, each coloured circle represents a theme or cluster of concepts that are closely interconnected. The size of the theme "circle" boundary does not represent the theme's significance within the context of the text. Prevalence is heat-mapped where the most important and interconnected themes are represented by the brightest and hottest colour; the least interconnected themes are represented by cooler colours. Figure 4.4 shows that the theme entitled people depicted by the colour red as the most interconnected, prevalent theme. As shown, each thematic hotspot or circle is underpinned by a group of supporting concepts are written in black. The level of conceptual interconnectedness will vary the position of each concept. For example the concepts entitled public and service are closely located within the theme entitled people and are also linked via the grey "relationship" line to the concepts entitled *deal* and *people*. The relationship between concepts, indicated by the grey lines, display how the concepts co-relate. This process also merges

closely interconnected "like" concepts or deletes over connected low value words such as "things," "with" and "the." Some concepts are shared across more than one theme. The researcher "washed" the data through the software a number of times to identify and differentiate between key and insignificant concepts, and identify key themes.

In regards to Study 1's face-to-face transcribed material, the researcher used Leximancer (Smith, 2011) to automatically generate six User Defined Tags, or concept seeds (or key words), entitled: "cyberbullying," "bullying," "colleagues," "employees," and "framework." The researcher manually inserted the seed words "govtclients" and "cybercomms" which co-located the disparate government clients identified by the interviewees (Ministers, Executive, public, departments, agencies, one another, staff, colleagues, domestic and international governments, non-government organisations etc.) and range of workplace cyber communications (including email, sms, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, iPad, iPhone etc.). The "cybercomms" concept seed was not displayed in the final concept map as it was subsumed under the overarching "media" concept. The software automatically grouped the lists of key concepts into a list of overarching themes.

Stage 4. Run Project: This process allows the user to manipulate the data to ensure the final concept map (see Figure 4.3, p. 127), displaying the concepts and themes, is clean and clear. At this stage the researcher manually compounded "like" concepts (such as "cyberbullying" with "online bullying") via Boolean operators (such as "and," "or," "not, and "not") to delve further into the research material. A manual filter was used by the researcher to determine the number of automatically generated concepts, user defined concepts, tags, and compound concepts to be visually displayed on the concept map.

Stage 5. Generate a Concept Map: Project Outputs under Run Project also allowed the researcher to manipulate the visual map displays or Concept Maps. In this regard, the researcher amended Leximancer's (Smith, 2011) default setting from 33%, to approximately 56%, thereby filtering the displayed themes to represent the most significant and prevalent themes and concepts.

4.5.3 Introduction to Study 1's face-to-face interviews

The aim of Study 1's face-to-face interviews was to assist the researcher answer the two research questions regarding public servants' perceptions as to the prevalence rates and consequences (work stress, job satisfaction and performance, and organisational culture) of workplace cyberbullying. As discussed, the qualitative data from Study 1's transcribed interview data was examined using the Leximancer Version 4.0 software (Smith, 2011), and resulted in five themes and 34 underlying concepts. In the subsections below, this thematic and conceptual output is presented visually as relational concept maps displaying a series of hot mapped overlapping circles.

4.5.4 Thematic Summary

The concept map shown in Figure 4.5 displays five themes generated from Study 1's transcribed data.

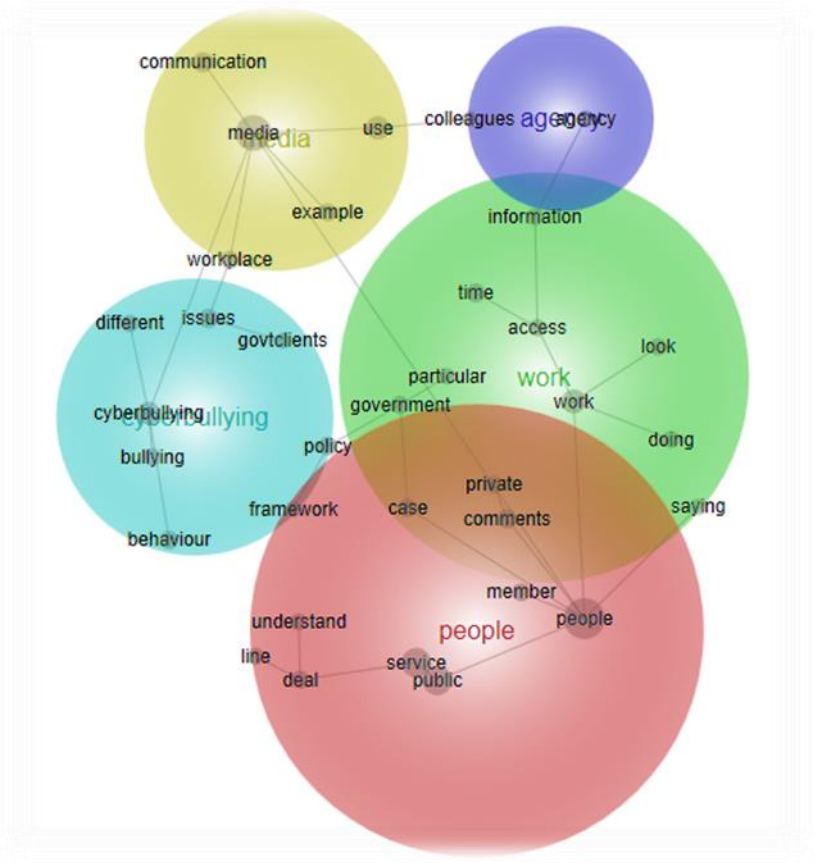


Figure 4.5. Thematic concept map: Study 1's five themes.

These five themes are represented as heat mapped colour-coded circles. The theme entitled *people* is depicted in the colour red and is the largest and "hottest"

theme and therefore the most interconnected and relevant within Study 1's data set. The next most interconnected and relevant themes are entitled *media* (yellow-pewter) *work* (green), *cyberbullying* (light blue), and *agency* (blue). Within these five circles 34 concepts are represented in black writing co-located with black dots. The grey lines indicate the relationship links between the themes and concepts. Figure 4.5 also shows that four of the five themes overlap, thereby providing an initial and visual indicator of significant conceptual interconnectedness and relevance across the themes entitled *people, work, agency* and *cyberbullying* and revealing participants' perceptions, that cyberbullying occurs at work and between people in public sector agencies.

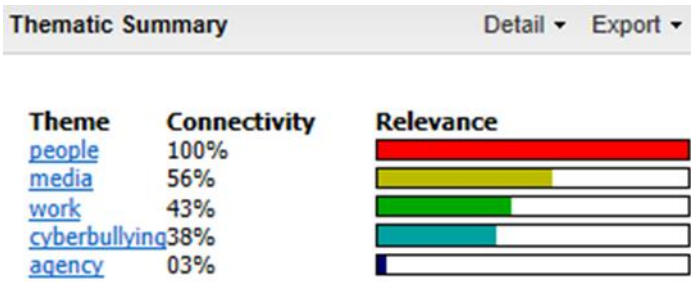


Figure 4.6. Thematic summary: Study 1 - five themes' connectivity and relevance.

Figure 4.6 shows three sets of data developed from Study 1's twenty-four transcribed face-to-face interviews. These data sets include the name of each theme, listed in terms of thematic importance, and thematic connectivity displayed as a percentage and relevance. Conceptual connectivity together with relevance and concept count demonstrates the measure of correlative validity as weighted against each concept (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). In this regard the theme *people* denotes 100% in terms of connectivity and relevance across Study 1's transcribed material, *media* is represented by 56% in terms of connective and relevance, *work* at 43%, *cyberbullying* at 38%, and *agency* at 03%.

Table 4.2 illustrates the number of times the computer-aided lexical software attaches related segments of text to a concept (Smith, 2003, 2011).

Table 4.2.

Study 1's 34 concepts

Word-Like	Count	Relevance
people	885	100%
media	679	77%
public	338	38%
service	333	38%
work	242	27%
use	234	26%
cyberbullying	201	23%
communication	155	18%
issues	131	15%
time	106	12%
comments	104	12%
behaviour	99	11%
policy	93	11%
case	79	09%
example	78	09%
deal	76	09%
workplace	75	08%
different	73	08%
look	69	08%
government	68	08%
member	65	07%
information	64	07%
doing	62	07%
agency	60	07%
bullying	56	06%
line	54	06%
private	53	06%
access	51	06%
understand	50	06%
saying	41	05%
particular	33	04%
framework	20	02%
govtclients	16	02%
colleagues	13	01%

In this instance, 34 concepts were generated from the interview data. Each concept map can be manipulated to display a list of concepts generated by Leximancer (Smith, 2011), however despite any changes that may be made to the look and feel of the concept map, this underlying list does not change while filters can change their positions in relation to the themes. The relative frequency each concept is counted across the transcribed material.

Table 4.3 displays the five themes and underlying conceptual and descriptive narrative, or storyline.

Table 4.3.

Study 1's five themes: Thematic and conceptual narrative

Themes	Thematic and conceptual narrative
People	The individuals, teams and groups of public sector employees, and how these elements influence workplace cyberbullying. This theme is displayed by the colour red as the most significant and highly connected and relevant (100%) factor perceived by the interviewed participants, which overlaps with the *bullying* and *work* themes to create a narrative indicative of people working in the public sector observing or experiencing workplace bullying.
Media	How, and why, different types of work-based cyber platforms are used by employees. This is highlighted by the colour yellow-pewter and represents a significant 56% in terms of connectivity and relevance and is not displayed with other thematic overlaps given this theme represents the cyber technologies as enabling tools for workplace cyberbullying, rather than the predicator behaviours/roles represented by the other four themes.
Work	The different work roles, positions, capabilities of employees involved in observing or experiencing workplace cyberbullying. This theme is highlighted by colour green and is the subsequently most connected and relevant (43%) theme that overlaps with *agency* and *people* themes - sharing the concepts entitled *private*, *comments*, and *case*.
Cyber bullying	The behaviours participants indicate represent workplace cyberbullying in the public service. This theme is displayed by the colour light blue, and represents 38% in terms of connectivity and relevance and overlaps *people* through the concept entitled *framework;* the overlapping illustrates the thematic narrative as people who work in the public service observing or experiencing cyberbullying behaviours from internal and external sources.
Agency	The types of government and non-government agencies. This theme is highlighted by the colour dark blue/purple is the fifth theme and is the least connected and relevant (3%) that overlaps the *work* theme (with no shared concept) as public sector work is conducted within government agencies and across other organisations.

By “washing” the data through the software, the researcher observed some variables with the key hot spot theme, whereby *people* may be instead represented as *public*. From the researcher’s perspective, the two thematic labels represent how the interviewees perceive their role as public servants and as people who work in public sector organisations to deliver services to people within the Australian public. Thus, from the perspective of the twenty-four interviewed public servants, these two themes are entwined.

The sections below provides an extensive evaluation of the transcribed material and language underpinning each theme and their interconnectedness and concepts; the Leximancer (Smith, 2011) platform provided the researcher with the ability to quickly delve into and investigate the data and the participants’ use of terminology and how this shaped each theme. Thematic and conceptual interconnectedness are illustrated through the use of descriptive text-based summarised quotes taken directly from the transcribed material.

4.5.5 Theme One | People

Figure 4.7 (refer to "helicopter view") shows that the theme entitled *people* is depicted by the colour red, and constitutes the most significant issue according to participants interviewed during Study 1, and relates to RQ1 and RQ2.

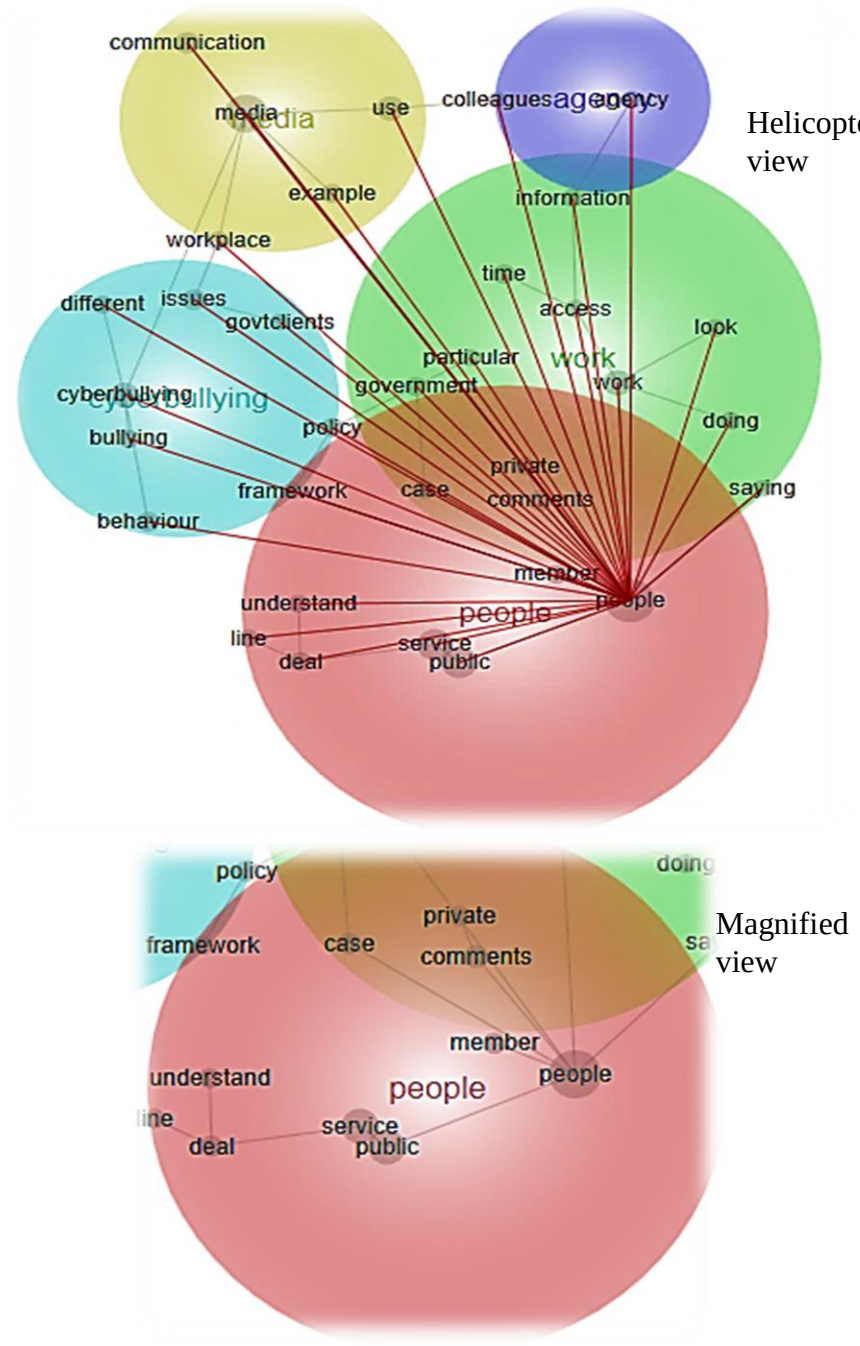


Figure 4.7. Thematic concept map: Theme entitled *People* taken from Study 1.

As illustrated in Figure 4.7, this theme is underpinned by nine concepts (displayed in black writing) labelled *people*, *public*, *service*, *private*, *comments*, *understand*, *case*, *line* and *member*. These concepts are connected by grey lines (refer

to "magnified view") where *people* is to three co-related threads, namely (a) *public, service, deal, understand* and *line,* (b) *member*, and *case,* and (c) *people, comments* and *private*.

This theme's significance is represented by the 100% connectivity and relevance across the transcribed material as illustrated by the red lines touching all the concepts and thematic circle. While the importance of the full thematic spread and three co-related threads are extensively discussed in the ensuing subsections, in summary these illustrate the public servants' perceptions as to the importance of their role as government employees, and administrators of Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local government policies. This theme also shows that public servants are aware of the growing influence and impact of CMC technologies on their working and private lives.

As displayed in Figure 4.7 (refer to "helicopter view", p. 136), the *people* theme overlaps with the *cyberbullying* and *work* themes and intersects at the *framework* concept (between people and cyberbullying) and the *private, case,* and *comments* concepts (between people and work). To explain these overlaps within the context of this research (investigating public servants' perceptions about negative workplace cyber communications – cyberbullying), these intersections represent perceptions by public servants about new tensions between their traditional legislative and policy-based boundaries (frameworks) and the new cyber work environment.

The findings raised under this theme help to answer the RQ1 raised by this study regarding whether public sector employees perceive workplace cyberbullying as manifesting in their workplaces. These findings also assist in answering the second question, that is, how do employees perceive this negative cyber behaviour impacting their job performance and job satisfaction, workplace stress, and organisation culture.

Concept – People

These tensions are initially encapsulated by a quote taken from the *people* concept (within the *people* theme) listed above. In this regard, interviewee #21 talks about how public servants are now constantly connected to work through hand-held mobile devices, while interviewee #11 discusses how this new online, accessibility

represents a new and possibly challenging work environment for most public servants, particularly when dealing with cyberbullying issues.

Interviewee #21 states:

Absolutely, everyone is connected, it's in everyone's hands, it's in their personal iPad devices, all the time. And they're not just connected through the servers we provide at their desktop [at work], they're connected in many other ways

Interviewee #11 declares:

> *I don't think public servants themselves have been given any opportunity to think ahead about how they would deal with these types of [cyber] situations before they arise. What levers should they pull, and who should they talk about it.*

Interviewee #8 refers to how public servants' private online cyber communications can be accidentally, or deliberately, be transposed into the work environment;

> *Then you have the slightly greyer area where people are involved in social media outside of work but where it relates to your work.*

In this regard, public servants perceive CMC as developing potentially new incongruous work behaviours, as described by interviewee #7 who relates an example where one public servant referenced their right (AHRC, 2015) to promulgate their anti-homosexual opinions across the workplace cyberplatform;

> *For example someone posted a derogatory comment in response to an article about homosexual people. So we had to unpublish that comment and act as a liaison with the person and Human Resources to educate the person…*

Interviewee #12 shares a potentially deliberate example of workplace cyberbullying by a senior person in the public service, and how this experience upset him to the extent it affected his sleep;

> *I was cyberbullied in this public service, by a very, very senior person. I'd be getting emails every Sunday evening. Just ripping strips off me. so I can't sleep, right, the whole night I don't sleep.*

Interviewee #12 also talks about confronting the senior public servant about the cyberbullying behaviour, and provide evidence as to the level of courage required by

junior public servants to confront a senior and more powerful public servant about these matters;

> *The next morning I print out the email and go to this person's office and say, 'I want to talk to you.' ...and I say, "Because of this [email]," I said. "I got this [email] and I couldn't sleep it so upset me, and one of the reasons it did was because you're right, but you gave me no way of communicating back to you. By the way I don't mind a fight or a "robust" discussion, but you've got to give me a chance to play." That's natural justice.*

Interviewee #11 mulls over the impact of online behaviour changing peoples' lives and workplace behaviour. In this regard, younger employees are increasingly applying their unofficial private CMC communications to the workplace context and thus enhancing the potential for public servants to possess both publically recognisable official, and private, online personas. Given the traditional role for public servants is to remain in the background and serve the government of the day (APSC, 2013c, 2014b), this ability to develop a more public persona is new for most government officials;

> *I think there may be more evidence of online behaviour in people's personal lives and as they apply this in the workplace setting. It's increasing. It's certainly increasing... I can see how these things will start to manifest into the future and I also think this is a generational thing. If I was an organisation this demographic is in the 30s – 40s demographic so, I'd expect the organisation with a larger demographic of younger people that this issue would be more prevalent and a concern.*

Concepts – Public and Service

Furthermore, the *people* theme reiterates public servants' awareness that, as part of their employment contract, their professional behaviour should align with legislative, policy and rules-based/institutionalised frameworks as representatives of Public Service and their respective agency (reputation). This awareness is expressed by employees as an ongoing anxiety around how to best resolve an evolving dichotomy and contradiction between existing and conservative work expectations enshrined in law, policies and governance arrangements, and the fast paced cyber environment. This concern is illustrated in the following excerpt where interviewee #23 comments:

> *The whole of public service legislative, education and policy framework provides sufficient guidance and support. But they are contradictory where public servants are encouraged to have their private points of view, however you must also, as public servants, follow or abide by the Code of Conduct.*

Interviewee #7 also describes how seeming valid online CMC workplace behaviour can be easily breach the public service's legislated Code of Conduct and Values (*Public Service Act 1999*);

> *…that the comment undermined the terms of use for that platform and breached the Code and Values. While this was all true, the person was adamant that they had a right to their opinions and referenced their Human Rights, however we viewed the matter within the context of the workplace Australian Public Service Code of Conduct and Values as our operating filter within which this workplace collaborative platform operated, and that derogatory personal views which caused pain or distress to another work colleagues was inappropriate*

Concepts – Private and Comments

Public servants appear to be inherently conscious of the employer's rights to monitor online work correspondence and, for example, are aware that work email and other cyber communication platforms are automatically monitored by their agency's ICT areas. Additionally, most social media commentary and posts are observed by both internal and external clients, and impacts how government employees work and make sense of their place in their organisations. This is indicated by interviewee #12 who says:

> *So it's not surprising that it impacts the way public servants work because public servants, despite the way legislation works, are about service and work is a second. So what it brings to bear is a real look at the type of service [the public service delivers to their customers] and if you look at the Public Service Act it will say that you are not authorised to make public statements on behalf of the government....*

Interviewee #12 also points to the public sector's increasing awareness by government employees that their official and private/personal online comments are being observed, and their public and personal online comments may be potentially taken out of context and reused other cyber platforms:

> *So, given that it's been important to try to understand the difference between me as a public servant and me as private person, well, you simply can't do that because to say that the private person must seek permission before saying anything is unnecessarily overbearing and probably won't work. But on the other hand we have to be clear about what it means to be a public servant.*

This potential for mass broadcasting of negative online workplace comments is illustrated by interviewee #14 who says, "where they removed negative comments on a [identifying name removed] forum. And of course the people who had made those comments...reported it on other places. The government redacted the information that was posted by the public..."

Interviewee #11 also asserts:

> *But I don't think staff who are getting right into social media such as Facebook and are sharing their personal stories for personal reasons ever stop to think about the ramifications about what that may mean for them in the context of their professional life.*

The following excerpt also supports this study's premise that, in accordance with Walther's (1992) SIP theory, employees interpret text-based online work communications through the organisation's cultural and social behaviours. This issue is addressed through the *comment* concept, where interviewee #4 states:

> *So I think there's more transparency and more immediacy to it. I can now shoot off an email, using my iPhone, to a government official about an experience I just had but there's no time now left for reflection to allow me to cool down.*

In addition, interviewee #15 points to public servants increasing awareness that personal online commentary can now impact their official roles and must be handled judiciously:

> *….so that's why any comment I make on my* Facebook *account I'm very conscious that it's me in my official role as well as my private role or capacity. To the extent that I'm very careful about what I tag as 'I like' because people can see that and take the wrong end of the stick.*

Concept - Case

Within this context, public service employees are increasingly exposed to cyberbullying events, which have the potential of affecting their reputation within their organisations and public service career. The quote below arises from one of the public service legal managers who were interviewed public servant. This quote indicates that government employees perceived workplace cyberbullying as manifesting both overtly and covertly, that is, anonymously. This perception is illustrated by interviewee #8 who observes:

> *I think it's [workplace cyberbullying] going to get worse… So if it's in Australia, there are various remedies under IT law. I have never looked at it that deeply because the reality is that they don't use an Australian web host or server, they use one in the US or elsewhere where it's much harder to get those cease and desist notices.*

In this regard, interviewee #8 discusses how government employees are now at risk of being anonymously cyberbullied by unknown internal and/or external perpetrators on websites and blogs developed through international publishers, and which are consequently highly difficult to remove from the public arena:

> *There's also a problem you've got with the notices that give to ISPs, but it's when it's a host, not an ISP provider, but a host such as "GoDaddy" or a publisher like "WebPress" that you don't have that same option. So in cases of this nature we've had to find some cause of action we can do that's not a private action. In the end we just decided to fund the employee to raise a request of "preliminary discovery" that allowed them to take those steps to find out the name of the person who actually set up the [web] account.*

Concept - Member

The *member* concept, which is also situated under the highly significant *people* theme, demonstrates how the potentially harmful effects on employees' reputation and career are now being realised by public servants, particularly in cases for public servants dealing with external bullying clients. This point is illustrated by interviewee #7 who states:

> *...and given the nature of the [cyber] platform, it also was accessible to broader audience including members of the community who were not eligible for this particular payment saw this advertisement and got upset*

because they thought they were being excluded. As a consequence the comments started to get quite direct between people who were eligible and people who were not.

Interviewee #8 stressed public sector concerns around defamation of employees and the potential to impact career prospects and that the personal defamation of government employees is not a matter for government to take public action on behaviour of public servants. Employees working in public sector organisations are thus vulnerable to slanderous claims against which they may struggle to protect themselves unless they seek compensation as a private citizen with their own lawyer:

I guess one part of the problem is a bit beyond bullying and that's the difficulty for the government to take action when a public servant has been defamed. Generally speaking it's not a matter for the government to take public action on behalf of a public servant, as in the website case and other online cases where a public servant has been defamed…The Australian Government's policy is that we do not commence defamation proceedings for [public service] employees because it's a private action, you get the money yourself [as a private citizen], and if you feel you've been defamed feel free to go and see a lawyer yourself. There have been several instances where this has arisen on context to this government and we've had to sit back and say, ok, we cannot represent these employees for defamation action, so what can we do to get this [cyberbullying] notice board taken down?

4.5.6 Theme Two | Media

As shown in Figure 4.8 (refer to "helicopter view"), the second most significant thematic hotspot with 56% connectivity and relevance, labelled *media* and depicted in a yellow or yellow-pewter colour, is supported by five concepts labelled in black writing. As indicated in the Thematic Summary, the theme entitled *media* represents the second most significantly interconnected topic under the highly significant *people* theme, and relates to RQ1.

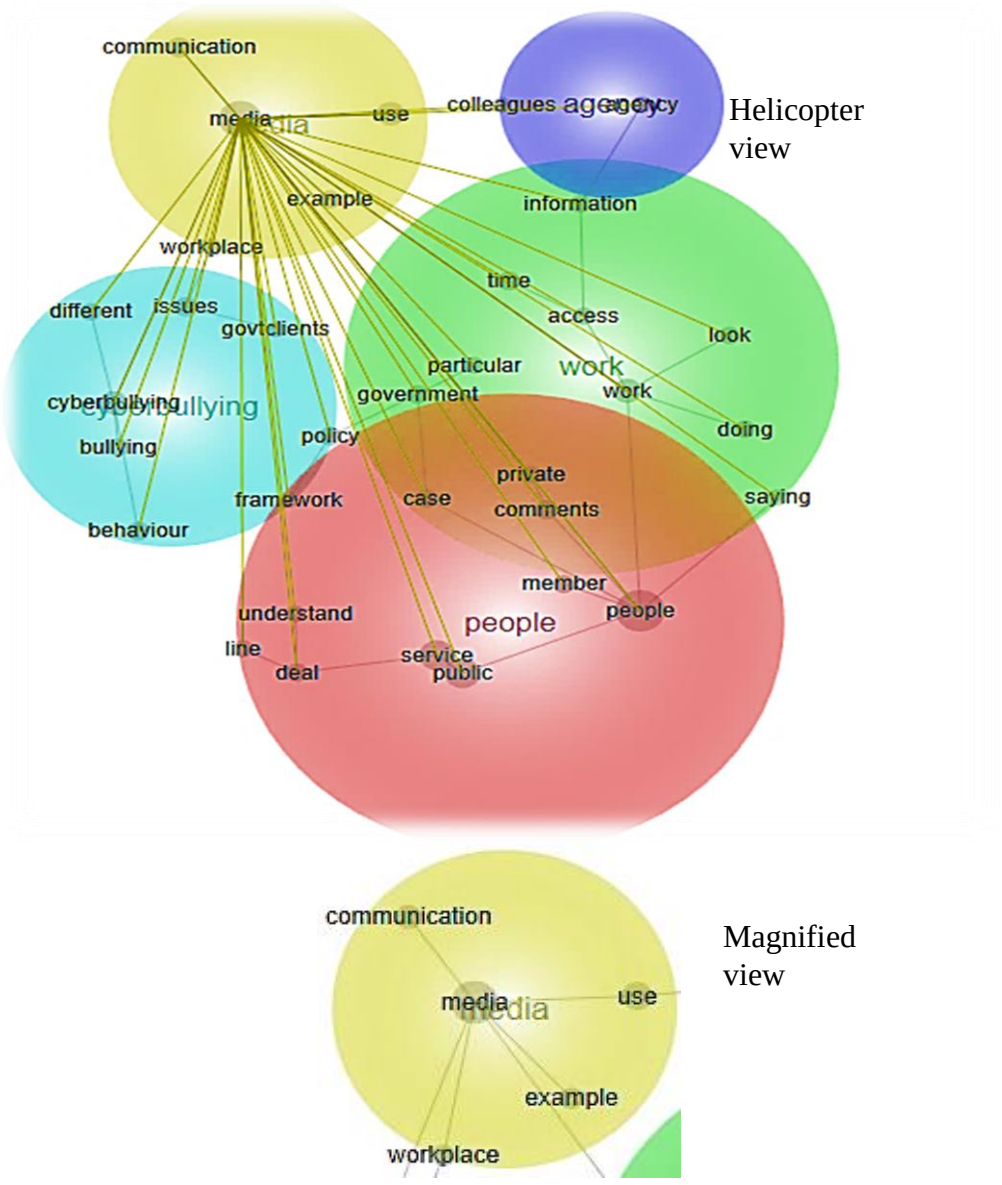


Figure 4.8. Thematic concept map: Theme entitled *Media* taken from Study 1.

Figure 4.8 demonstrates this theme is not thematically overlapped with the other four themes, thus illustrating public servants' perceptions in regards to cyber technology or media as an enabler or tool, rather than an expression of workplace

cyberbullying behaviour (Carlson & Zmud, 1999; Muhl, 2003; Romm & Pliskin, 1997). The yellow-pewter coloured straight lines show that this theme is highly interconnected across the transcribed corpus. The grey lines (refer to Figure 4.8, "magnified view") depict the relationship between each concept and theme and indicate that the five concepts entitled *communication, example, use,* and *workplace* are connected only to the *media* theme. This indicates that cyber media/cyber platforms are perceived by government employees as workplace enablers rather than predictors of online bullying (Carlson & Zmud, 1999; Muhl, 2003; Romm & Pliskin, 1997). The tools do not dictate how they are used. This theme provides evidence in support to the first research question, which asks how government employees perceive workplace cyberbullying manifesting across their workplaces.

Thematic and Concept Findings: Media

The findings depicted under this concept further illustrate employees' perceptions that cyber platforms are workplace communication platforms (Carlson & Zmud, 1999; Muhl, 2003; Romm & Pliskin, 1997) across which workplace cyberbullying behaviour is transmitted.

Concepts – Media and Use:

The excerpts below, provided under the concepts *media* and *use*, both of which demonstrate participants' awareness that workplace media, or cyber tools, both facilitate workplace interconnectedness (positive) and yet also are used by employees to convey aggressive, bullying online communications (negative). Interviewee #14 talks about the types of cyber platforms available in public sector work spaces. This excerpt indicates that government employees perceive that most web-based application, including email, can possess a social media dimension given content can be easily moved across cyber platforms, such as moving an email comment to Facebook or vice versa:

> *In my workspace, the things that fall into the workplace social media category are Twitter and Facebook and the associated applications such as YouTube and other file sharing applications such as the web platform, closed network stuff such as workplace Sharepoint and shared web access. And I would say our intranet [internal website] is moving more into a social media dimension because it has contents on it that could be generally*

defined as social media….The platforms aren't relevant at all, it's how it's being used.

Furthermore, public servants mixed perceptions regarding cyber technology is illustrated by the excerpts taken from interviewee numbers 11, 15 and 16 below. Interviewee #11 explains how public sector employee behaviour is bound by the relevant State, Territory and Commonwealth legislated Code of Conduct, and how this code is perceived as inhibiting public servants protect their organisation's information:

So I can see that these online communications will start to come into play more and more particularly as the public service advocates a particular position for Government….it does relate to a [public service] Code of Conduct issue really, in terms of raising the bar around information flowing and our ability to keep on top of all that.

Additionally, interviewee #15 talks about how work email can be used as a cyber tool to circumnavigate the public sector's conduct/behaviour rules:

We've all found that people tend to use email in a manner that they wouldn't if they were having a face-to-face conversation, so ... how you maintain and support public service values and code of conduct and those sorts of things.

The transcribed excerpts below also offer an insight about how cyber technology is changing expectations in how and what the public sector provides their clients in terms of access and information as noted by interviewee #16,

…there is a change in societal expectations about what is expected from the public service and I don't think we've fully cottoned onto that change – what is our future going to look like?

Concept - Communications:

The concept entitled *communications* illustrates public servants' perceptions that additional skills and performance requirements are now required to appropriately respond to the changing work expectations, particularly when using work-based cyber platforms to communication for which there is little or no training. Interviewee #5 further says:

So all I now need to think about is a [single] sentence to convey my intent, it's even harder to write something short than it is to write it long, that we

think people are skilled enough to write 140 characters to get across with clarify the intent and mindset without ambiguity to a broader audience?

This quote plus the extract below from interviewee #5 alludes to Walther's (1992) SIP theory, in that employees are more likely to consider and interpret the intent of workplace text-based cyber messages within the context of accepted organisational online behaviour.

And I think that's kind of an interesting thing. A broader number of people have access and ability to influence, but how skilled and experienced are they to use the written word to convey their intent. I wonder about that, I've got to tell you. Both from a public service perspective and as a Joe Bloggs [non-public servant perspective).

The excerpt above also alludes to the perception by public servants that, to effectively use these various cyber communication technologies platforms employees need to be trained with skills in how to develop messages that convey the right intent.

Concepts – Workplace and Example:

The concept entitled *workplace* further clarifies public servants' use of workplace cyber platforms as enabling tools and their perceptions about how the traditional public sector culture, expressed as a Code of Conduct and enshrined in law (such as Section 13 of the *Public Sector Act 1999*). Interviewee #15 elaborates upon these changes and raises the notion that workplace cyberbullying is simply traditional bullying being communicated across the new work cyber platforms:

I've seen a number of what have become Code of Conduct issues, which embedded in there is an email,...I've seen and had a real case three or four years ago of the inappropriate use of email from a member of the department that could be argued was workplace behaviour... And he'd done this [using] his workplace email address…

Interviewee #15 also indicates that government employees are increasingly aware of the potential for being anonymously cyberbullied where targets are being named. This naming process has potentially consequences on individuals' well-being, reputation, and career prospects.

So look …I'm aware of one case, which I don't know where it originated from, where a website was set up and populated by comments around "I hate my supervisor" and naming people.

The concept entitled *example* highlights the variety of new issues being developed as a consequence of these new workplace cyber communication enablers (Carlson & Zmud, 1999; Muhl, 2003; Romm & Pliskin, 1997), the impact on all public servants working in frontline areas and dealing directly with clients. This quote also highlights the need for whole-of-public sector resilience training, as indicated by interviewee #16 who observes:

...some [frontline] staff just can't hack this type of work environment, don't have the right background or ability or training, and have to leave because they take it personally or respond badly and have no resilience and that then has consequences on their long term careers….To go forward I think we need to gear up and develop better tooling, more sophisticated government services supporting the community. This also ensures that our front line staff aren't unnecessarily exposed to bullying or harassment whether that be face-to-face or cyber.

Interviewee #13 discussed the perception that inappropriate and bullying emails are prevalent as a consequence that (a) emails may be sent before individuals have time to think about any possible consequences, and (b) the lack of tone and inflection in an email can escalate miscommunications. This issue alludes to the SIP theory's notion that the lack of social cueing in CMC communication results in miscommunication and enhanced through their group's accepted attitudes and behaviours (Walther, 1992).

We have seen inappropriate and bullying emails sent between staff members and again I think people may say things in email they later regret. Again the tone of the email is difficult to grasp, people might say something in email that may come across wrong when they didn't mean it that way. It's devoid of tone and inflection and people read tone and inflection into it and respond in kind, and it then escalates.

While interviewee #12 reconfirms that, while work email is considered the key cyber platform for most public sector inter/intra cyber communications, it can also be used negatively:

> *… an example would be email where people, I think, wrongly feel they can assert control and have an impact through email that they wouldn't necessarily have face-to-face….Email is a fascinating area. But email, at least at the moment, remains in the public service and organisations as very important. ...And that's an interesting distancing from taking accountability for one's actions through technology. And I think it, you get things played out through email that are very email specific. For example, it's a brilliant way of buck passing you know... But people use it [email] as a way of saying "Well, I told you, I sent you an email." And it's inappropriate and very rude and doesn't work. There's an argument that some people's styles in email can be very easily misinterpreted you know, the emoticon in email, smiley faces and all that help, but truly people can be incredibly abrupt.*

These extract support the notions espoused through SIP theory (Walther, 1992), and epitomised within in the social psychological construct, that government employees' interpretation of text-based cyber communication is perceived by public servants as generally developed through their understanding of what officially constitutes accepted online work behaviours. Also echoing the constructs developed through SIP, the following quote highlights public servants' perceptions concerning the potential for work email to create miscommunications that may quickly escalate to cyberbullying. These points are raised by interviewee #13:

> *Miscommunication… I think the scope for it is greater in emails, for misinterpretation, and feeling that you're being harassed or bullied, is greater in email….you can perceive yourself as being attacked through email that you might not come across elsewhere. Possibly because people take work emails very personally. I think that's typical of all bullying and harassment matters.*

Interviewee #23 discusses perception that public sector agencies using blogs or social media to directly communicate on public forums and with customers (the Australian public) are more likely to experience or observe cyberbullying between members of the public:

> *...the Department doesn't yet have the social media public forums so the public-public attacks – cyberbullying behaviour on our Departmental platforms doesn't happen, yet…*

Interviewee #22 also notes that, given public servants' increasing personal usage of Facebook to discuss personal concerns in a private manner, and that sometimes these comments may be derisive of government policy decisions and thus breach their responsibilities as public servants to remain apolitical and uphold the policies of government of the day (APSC, 2010):

> *The department has to assume that staff using Facebook will probably get their views out into the public domain, however our social media training will at least educate them on their responsibilities as public servants.*

While interviewee #8 discusses the perception that negative workplace cyber communications reflect inappropriate traditional face-to-face workplace behaviour:

> *...I've found that the inappropriate use of social media outside of work that has involved work matters such as slagging off your boss on Facebook. And also where social media has been used, in a recent case, to bully and harass and take revenge against public servants.*

4.5.7 Theme Three | Work

Figure 4.9 (refer to "helicopter view") displays the third most significant thematic hotspot, labelled *work* and shown in green, represents 43% in terms of thematic connectivity and relevance. As described in the Thematic Summary, this theme is significant in terms of connectivity and relevance and relates to both research questions.

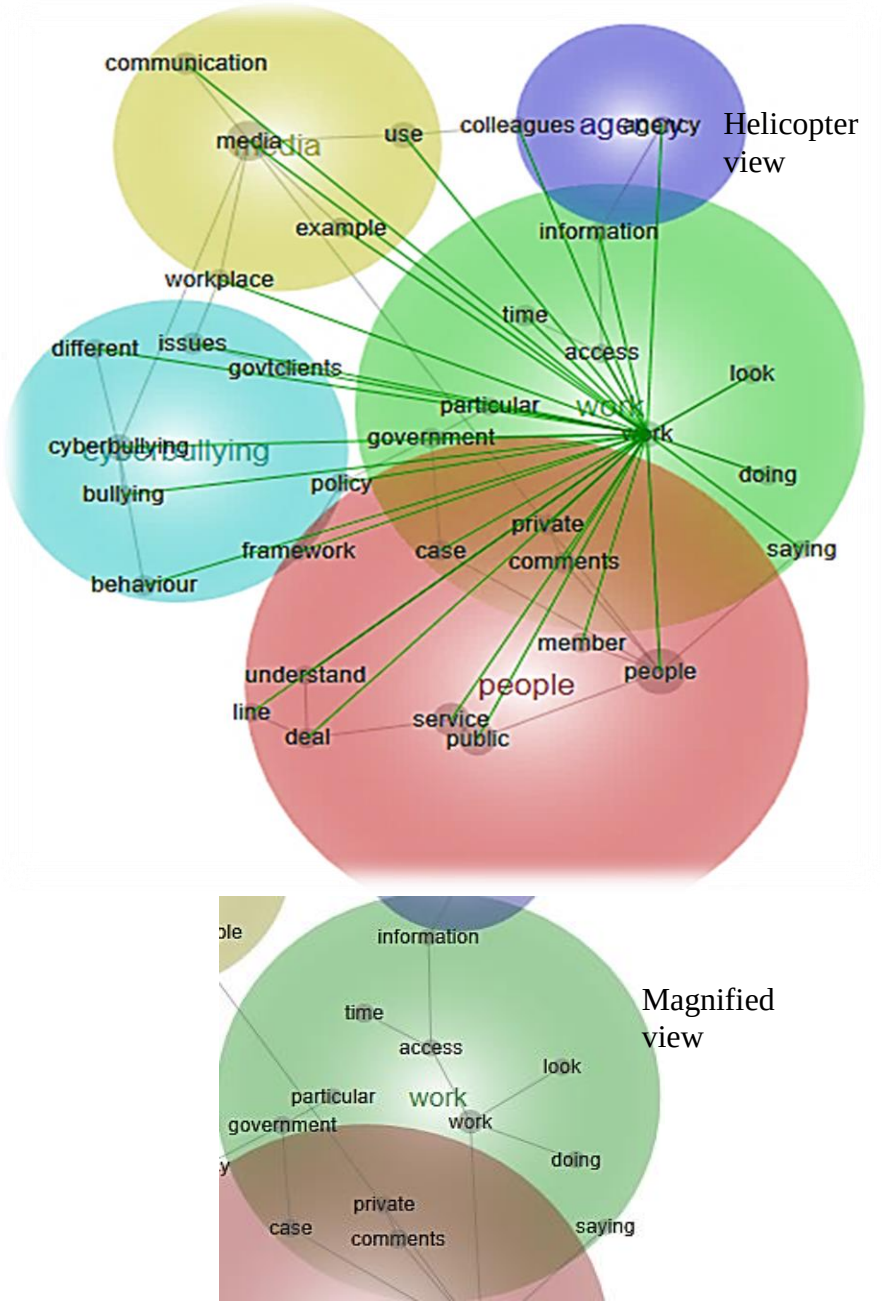


Figure 4.9. Thematic concept map: Theme entitled *Work* taken from Study 1.

The *work* theme is underpinned by 12 concepts depicted in black writing. These 12 concepts include *work*, *time*, *government*, *private*, *access*, *information*,

saying, comments, case, look, doing, and *particular,* all of which are discussed in detail in the sections below. The grey lines (refer to Figure 4.9 "magnified view") link each concept represents their conceptual relationship; for example the grey lines linking of *work, access, time* and *information* illustrate employees perceptions that cyberbullying regards the access or restriction to information, some of which can be time critical. Intersections occur across the *people* and *work* themes, it is significant that these two themes share three concepts entitled *private, case* and *comment*.

These conceptual overlaps reveal employees' perceptions regarding a blurring between their public or work life and private life. This overlap also highlights a growing awareness that work life and personal/home life are now intersecting, where work issues are literally being carried from work to home via mobile technology platforms such as iPhones, BlackBerry phones, and smart Tablets. This phenomenon has been raised within both the people and media themes. The empirical evidence depicted under this theme supports the first (prevalence) and second (consequences) research questions.

Concept - Work:

This blurring between public sector employees' personal and work lives, is a significant element that has been highlighted by interviewee #11 within the context of the *work concept*. This interviewee posits the notion that the public sector will likely use more cyber technologies in the future, and that these cyber capabilities increasingly overlap employees work and private personas and perceptions around job satisfaction:

> *I think it's [cyber communications by public servants with external customers] increasing. I don't think it's prevalent as I still think we're in the early adopters stage particularly in a workplace context. I think there may be more evidence of online behaviour in people's personal lives and as they apply this in the workplace setting. It's increasing. It's certainly increasing. You now have to be clear as to when you're speaking as "Joe" the person from home, and the official who's representing the public sector or government.*

Interviewee #11 further suggests that frontline staff, dealing directly with external customers on regulatory matters, are more exposed to workplace

cyberbullying as a consequence of their role (as client support staff) both during and outside normal work hours:

> *I agree [that front line staff are at risk] and I think that's the risk that we've always had where case workers have always been vulnerable, whereas the medium in the past has been letter writing or phone calls, now it's voice mail messages or email, or more recently emails because they've had to open these channels of communication [with the clients], because they've had a very direct form of relationship with the client. So any of the statutory functions where we've had to make the type of decisions that have a negative impact on the party [client], means the public servant is very vulnerable and are identifiable[to the public].... The risk is the same but the consequences are much more serious because it's that much more difficult to control and it's 24/7.*

Concept - Time:

Under the *time* concept, interviewee #13 provides a personal example of the consequences of workplace cyberbullying on her health and job performance. These consequences arose from an anonymous website created by disaffected public servants who posted comments about her work and personal capabilities.

> *Having to get psychological assistance from the Employment Assistance Program, self-harm thoughts, depression, your health breaking down and being hospitalised like I was [two months in hospital with pneumonia] and even if the person [target] doesn't end up taking time off work, their behaviour at work is certainly affected even visibly distressed or retreating from the people around them and low performance are all on the other extreme; heightened agitation, distressed, lack of ability to display judgement… inside having this feeling that it gnawing away at you inside that it was so unfair and so unjustified and feeling absolutely powerless to do anything about it.*

Interviewee #13 not only reflects on the culture of her organisation in helping her deal with this cyber behaviour, but also discusses her ambiguity around how the inefficacious workplace resolution processes affected her psychological and physical state. While this interviewee was undergoing this workplace cyberbullying, she was also concerned about her ability to remain an effective a member of the senior executive service. During the interview, the participant said that during this period,

she had been in the middle of re-applying for her senior executive position and was understandably concerned the public defamation would obstruct her career prospects, particularly given she was now reporting to a new supervisor. Workplace cyberbullying thus created a sense of powerlessness, and influenced this interviewee's sense of job satisfaction, ability to perform at a high level, while the unremitting stress substantially eroded her health. These points are illustrated in the excerpt below:

> *Let's be honest I wanted to get the person who was behind the website and I couldn't … And while I was running around, because there were other people named on this website, so I was running around keeping them propped up and checking in with them and making sure they were ok and debriefing them, you know I was told I just needed a standard response when people started talking to me about it. And I was thinking 'How about me?*

Interviewee #23 talks about the inter-connectedness created as a consequence of increasingly mobile workforce, and touches on the changed work environment:

> *Absolutely, everyone is connected, it's in everyone's hands, it's in their personal iPad devices, all the time. And they're not just connected through the servers we provide at their desktop [at work], they're connected in many other ways…*

The extract below, provided by interviewee #14, delves into public sector perceptions that cyber communications are intersecting across online and offline work environments:

> *You know, think about all the bad examples in the workplace – people having affairs in the workplace, people breaking up, falling out over whatever, harassing and bullying people at work. …. I think there's an insidious covert sort of harassment and bullying, you know, when your manager sends you an email instead of walking over and talking to you, or makes appointments then cancels them – constantly, or that sort of stuff which is subtle but undermining your position and value. That's really low level technology use but it's still very difficult to manage.*

Interviewee #14 further extrapolates public servants' awareness that cyber communications usage is perceived as increasingly important within public sector organisations, particularly by supervisors wanting or needing constant contact with

their employees. This need for out-of-hours contact may not necessarily point to bullying, however, consistent out-of-hours work requests could be perceived as bullying particularly if the issues being raised pertained to normal administrative matters rather than urgent issues. This element also alludes to concerns regarding employees who experience cyber-fatigue and work stress as a consequence of unremitting accessibility to work:

> *I mean your manager can send you emails that reach you anywhere you go 24/7 on your Blackberry, asking you to do stuff out of work hours. That happens a lot, depending on the manager.*

Concept - Government:

Within the *government* concept, interviewee #11 reflects on how cyber communications now offer government employees the opportunity to connect more broadly with their constituents. However technology also enables customers to provide instantaneous feedback on government services which interviewee #11 suggests staff may be insufficiently trained to handle and may therefore be a new source of performance stress:

> *I think we're in one of those cross roads with information within government …When it comes down to particular individuals I think that's going to get very personal. It's always something we've always had to grapple with and it [cyber communications such as social media] just makes that communication more unpredictable. So for our staff it provides yet another channel for not only positive things to happen, but for negative things to happen, such as cyberbullying and cyber harassment. I do think it is changing the way we think about issues management.*

The dilemma supervisors now face regards whether they, as supervisors, 'friend' their staff on their staff's private Facebook sites to protect other staff from being cyberbullied or bullied, is illustrated by interviewee #24:

> *Older people [at work] are more likely to be abused by social media but are less likely to be aware that the abuse is going on because they're less likely to have access to the platforms and social networks. So in some of the cases I've dealt with as a supervisor is that a low level form of workplace victimisation is occurring and may have been for a long time before the target is aware of it. So it can be more stressful because the behaviour of the team may be changing around this target, but the target is unsure why and*

they can get stressed. This really happens more often than you think. So obviously this is really damaging to workplaces when this sort of online behaviours starts.

Furthermore, interviewee #7 discusses employees' perceptions regarding the perceived lack of specific guidance from existing public service policies, guidelines and so forth on how to best support employees as they cope with government-customer social media capabilities. This concern is raised in the context of work performance and culture, as seen in the extract below from interviewee #7:

I think the Australian Public Service is really trying to find out how this works and we're using each other's experience and mistakes to learn what to do and what not to do because there's no templates or frameworks available on this yet. There's no guidance to the Public Service on how government should enter into social media platforms and commentary. We [the Department] were told in 2009 to start up a Departmental Twitter account and so we did. We started off by saying 'hi, I'm xx and this is what I'm about' and then we had legal knocking on our door saying, 'Did you consult with us before you went ahead with this and did you consider the different risks that you've exposed the Department to?

Concept – Private:

Under the *private* concept, interviewee #24 reiterates a point of concern made in previous sections , whereby cyber platforms not only enable public servants to be highly connected and accessible to clients and customers, yet this constant accessibility is also impinging on employees' personal, family time.

So 20 or so years ago our employment was defined by silent phone numbers and so you felt protected to some degree that your private life and family would be protected from your work life. However this isn't the case anymore because the lines are blurred. It's quite easy for members of the public to check out the agency on our website and figure out our email addresses, particularly since this agency is living in such a close work and social environment within Canberra; it's so small that people get to know your name, and once they know your name they can figure out your work email and personal information such as your home address. ..but there's now a real blurring of the lines between your professional accessibility ...

Interview #24 underpins the point that cyber technology has become a two-edged sword in that the inter-connectedness improves work efficiency, yet employees are also dealing with new work expectations of being available twenty-four hours, seven days a week:

> *People just think you're always accessible 24/7 ... people will recognise you and come up at any time, when you're with your family, and say anything at all.*

Concepts – Information and Case:

Regarding the concepts entitled *information* and *case*, interviewee #7 talks about how internal websites, such as blogs, assists geographically dispersed teams to facilitate project communications:

> *It [internal blogging platform] actively help people to connect who are geographically dispersed to problem shoot, brainstorm ideas, build connections, lessons learned all, that type of thing. So it's a great tool for work connections and researching. Last time I looked there were 11 research teams, and I don't know how many program areas, so how are we expected to share information? So this system has been great learning tool and great way to make connections.*

However, interviewee #5 reflects on how this new internal cyber communications can also represent a risk to organisations:

> *How do we get some consistency in our approach? How do we remain innovative in its [social media/cyber communications with external clients and customers] application? ... a lot of the conversations have been around, well, what's actually going on, how have people responded, and what are the issues? What are the strengths of it and if someone asks us "how do we manage this risk?" what would we say? The risk question is a biggy. And what sort of risks are we talking about, and the likelihood and all that sort of stuff.*

Concept – Look, Doing, Access and Comments:

Within the concept labelled *look*, interviewee #7 discusses the potential for personal appearances to act as an instigator of workplace cyberbullying:

And my General Manager [senior officer] has been a victim of a few cases directed at xx because of how he looks and while he's pretty resilient, it's not nice when people pick on you or mark you in that way.

Resilience is also raised within the concepts labelled *doing* and *access* and *comments* and indicates public servants' awareness as to the pervasive and highly intense nature of work cyber communications and cyberbullying comments, particularly as these work matters can now be taken home via mobile Tablets and iPhones as indicated by interviewee #7:

I know …my team have been talking about cyberbullying. I think it's worse than face-to-face because people carry their phones in their pockets, now with the smart phones you get updated on everything that's happening and it's so invasive on your life, so we're really lucky that there haven't been any really serious consequences to this.

Concepts - Particular and Saying:

The two concepts entitled *particular* and *saying* demonstrate the new tensions arising from dealing with the consequences of cyber communications, and the expectations mandated by traditional public sector legislative and policy frameworks, as enumerated by interviewee #22 who discusses employees' potential confusion regarding the appropriateness of "liking" Facebook websites through their private Facebook accounts:

Like, what is deemed "official" what is deemed "private" as a public servant? Are you allowed to join this [online] campaign even though it goes against your Department's policy, and you can argue, well it's on my private Facebook page, and they [the Department] can argue, well it's about official Department policy.

Interviewee #22 also reflects on the new work expectations created by cyber technologies, where employees' online private posts and comments are increasingly accessible and are at increased risk of accidentally breaching the Australian Public Service code of conduct:

And I think, I know we've sought black and white advice and received very grey advice and I don't think there is any black and white at the moment. I think we've got a bit of a way to go in the public service before we can be comfortable enough to say we can educate people in the social media space

because we don't quite know how to protect staff, I don't think. ...that's an education because I think that some people don't realise that by them having a bad day at work and saying they can't stand their boss on their personal Facebook page, and when that gets to their boss, then that gets considered a breach of the Australian Public Service Code of Conduct.

4.5.8 Theme Four | Cyberbullying

As shown in Figure 4.10 (refer to "helicopter view"), the fourth most significant theme, *cyberbullying*, is depicted by the colour light blue and represents 38% connectivity and relevance. This theme substantiates both research questions.

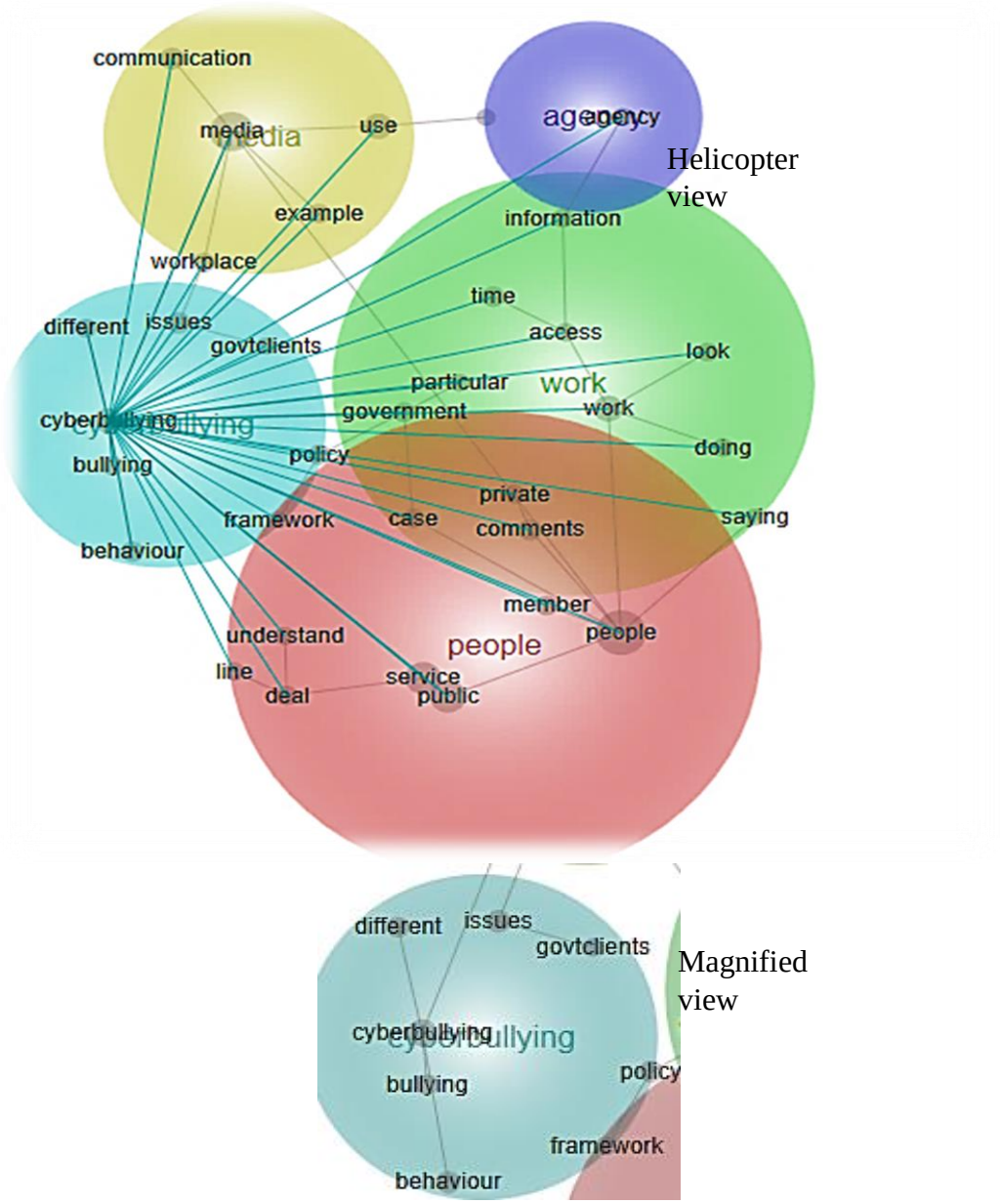


Figure 4.10. Thematic concept map: Concept entitled *Cyberbullying* taken from Study 1.

Figure 4.10 illustrates eight underlying concepts supporting the cyberbullying theme. These underlying concepts entitled cyberbullying, issues, policy, behaviour, bullying, different, framework and govtclients (government clients). Apart from single co-correlation between the cyberbullying and different concepts, the grey lines (refer to Figure 4.10, "magnified view") represent two correlated streams between (a) cyberbullying, bullying and behaviour (indicating employees' perceptions cyberbullying is a bullying behaviour), and cyberbullying, issues and govtclients (via the media and workplace concept located in the media theme). This latter relationship link indicates cyberbullying is perceived by participants as both an internal issue between co-workers/colleagues/supervisors and external clients and customers or government clients. This theme represents the fourth largest thematic hotspot both in terms of connectivity and relevance across the transcribed material.

In further examining Figure 4.10, it becomes apparent that one conceptual intersection has occurred between the *cyberbullying* and the primary theme entitled *people*: this overlap occurred at the *framework* concept. This conceptual connection is significant, as the transcribed material has revealed that public servants perceive work frameworks, including legislative regulations, guidelines, policies and so forth, as important regulatory instruments that govern their workplace behaviour and conduct. Empirical evidence from this study corroborates both research questions.

Concept - Cyberbullying:

As indicated in the excerpts taken from the transcribed material, cyberbullying is perceived as a more subtle adult behaviour particularly within communications involving power imbalance between the two participants as indicated by interviewee #12, who says:

> *I think cyberbullying is more subtle with adults, sometimes... the whole sort of communication [is] around employees to employer, or manager to worker. I mean it's a complex thing to get right because on the one level you've got two people talking to each other, and on another level you've got a representative of the hierarchy of the organisation and carrying policy for that organisation and the worker, um.*

Interviewee #12 continues upon this theme by describing one of the few examples provided by public servants of successfully confronting a cyberbully. In

this instance the perpetrator was using the work mobile phone to and abuse the interviewee at 3am in the morning;

"So if you want to ring me up at 3am in the morning and yell at me, do it, I'm giving you permission. But I will yell back. I'm telling you because I respect you!" And end of story, it never happens again and they're very polite to me in email.

While interviewee #14 expresses concerns around public servants' private use of the new cyber communication platforms and the blurring between home and work life:

> *I remember working in the Minister's office [as a Departmental Liaison Officers] and they were all Facebook friends and Facebook networkers and they were always at me to join them and I thought that it would be such a bad idea to get into that because of the way it blurs the lines between work and social/private life so heavily.*

Interviewee #14 also reflects on government employees as official representatives of the government of the day, and the consequences of private online comments potentially undermining this position:

> *I think one of the things around cyber material for people is that regardless of the benefits it conveys to you in terms of your personal life you've also got to be responsible to your official position, and if your position is any kind of managerial role then that's one of the things you would guard against, I would think. It's all so new that people aren't necessarily thinking of the consequences.*

Concepts – Issues and Policy:

Under the *issues* and *policy* concepts, interviewee #3 voices concerns around the efficacy of public sector legacy frameworks (legislation, policies, guidelines, procedures). The quote below indicates serious concerns regarding the existing governance processes in effectively resolving with the various forms of negative workplace cyber communication now appearing between government employees and from and between external clients and customers:

> *[The] same issues apply with cyberbullying and ongoing cyber harassment. The old protection processes [policy frameworks] were very different – there was personal discipline around account management – only certain people signed their name to documents and they were the [only] visible points of*

contact. Now the technology makes it easier for people to exert pressure and professional defamation is a lot easier now, it's very easy for individuals to be held out for ridicule on websites. Email accounts are easy to determine especially for "professional" cranks who knows how government works, it's always first name dot last name at your government department.gov.au. Websites are also being used to publically defame officials who are just doing their job. [It's] very hard to stop sophisticated campaigns especially for websites that are internationally based. It's hard to shut them down.

While interviewee #11 reflects concerns that the capacity of existing governance frameworks may be unequal to the task of intervening, or preventing, cyberbullying events:

I don't know whether our existing frameworks [legislative and policy] will support us with cyberbullying or online stalking or harassment behaviours or [are able to] take us, as a public sector into the future. I really don't know, that's the short answer to your question. And there's another side of the coin, regarding whether there's any legal provision that could protect us [as] employees from clients that use [these] online mechanisms. So I don't believe there's anything prescriptive [regulatory] that would protect clients from poor behaviour by public servants that are masking their identity, or the other way around.

Alternatively, interviewee #5 posits the notion that these new work issues can be mitigated using existing risk management techniques:

It's a business tool, and any issues around the risks around cyberbullying and harassment are dealt with through the normal risk management process, identify this as a key risk, and adapt the "communication" risk statement generic to the department to develop a set of social media risks, so they now have this thing that says if you're going to use social media, these are the risks and this is how you can mitigate them and it is being shared across all agencies.

Concepts - Behaviour and Bullying and Different:

The concepts entitled *behaviour*, *bullying* and *different* delves into the public sector participants' perceptions around cyber tools and how these tools provide

internal and external clients with additional avenues to convey aggressive communications, particularly for employees working in high stress environments in which staff interact with unhappy clientele. This point is substantiated by survey respondent #1_99 who wrote "Frontline staff are having their work performance publicised on YouTube by disgruntled clients (public) who are unhappy with the longer waiting queues at Centrelink and Medicare." and interviewee #22:

> *...it's [cyber communication] quick and you can vent without realising the consequences on the readers or recipients. If you're not happy with a decision you can voice it, at that person, straight away, without calming down. And I think that's the difference with social media. Some of these people would still have made the 500 phone calls or written the letter to the Minister about how unjust "it" all is and try to get mainstream media interested. But now they can actually direct their comments to us, straight away, and try to get momentum, straight away. Do we as public servants think about this cyber behaviour as cyber bullying, cyber harassment, or just that it's unfortunate behaviour?*

Interviewee #13 reflects on the pervasiveness of traditional face-to-face workplace bullying behaviour within government agencies and between public servants, and how this behaviour is perceived as infecting workplace cyber communications:

> *It's [online workplace technology] certainly given them [bullies] a very convenient tool to bully other people, and if you're predisposed to it then you're predisposed to it. There would be people who wouldn't be game to engage in that sort of behaviour in a face-to-face context because they're gutless, that now have a very convenient way of doing it, but then most bullies are gutless anyway, it's just made it easier for them. In the workplace I've seen plenty of traditional bullying examples where people find ways of getting at other people if they want to and it doesn't involve any face-to-face confrontation, it's all about rumour mongering and social isolation.*

The varying forms that external online workplace bullying now occurs is illustrated by interviewee #20, who says:

> *...[for example] personal abuse that is directed at officials on Twitter. [Name removed] has received hundreds of Twitter comments that were abusive and bullying. The only reason [name removed] received these is*

> *because he is a known official who represents the government on media issues. It wasn't because [name removed] approved or personally endorsed the [program], but he was targeted. He was able to just ignore it because of this context. [Another example was] Twitter Cabinet; there was an example of cyberbullying where some Tweets that initiated by "xxx" [that] were threatening the Ministers and we had to get the police involved to look into it. We were also able to block the Tweeter.*

These sentiments are somewhat reiterated in the concept entitled *different*, where interviewee #13 suggests cyber technologies represent a different platform across which humans may convey aggressive communications:

> *And I think the online or cyber technology hasn't developed this behaviour – it's always been there and it's always been vitriolic, but the cyber technology has just made it more pervasive. You can have anonymous letter campaigns to the Commissioner or Minister or Canberra Times or whoever, the hard copy letter campaign is just not as pervasive because it's not instantly available, but the behaviour is still there. It's just a different form and it's not as easily disseminated (in letter form) unless someone scans it and shares it online.*

Concept - Framework:

The concept labelled *framework* refers to the changing work environment and expectations, while employees' behaviour remains bound by pre-cyber laws (APSC, 2013c; *Public Service Act 1999*). Interviewee #1 reflects on employees' perceptions that organisational governance frameworks, while extensive, now incorporate a number of inconsistencies in regards to specific guidance on intervening and preventing aggressive online communications and behaviour (Kowalski et al., 2008):

> *So [the Public Service Commission] will deliver a policy about bullying or cyberbullying for the whole of Service, and Human Services [in each agency] will scratch their head and say "well, that doesn't really work for us in our client base and environment so we'll need to tweak this policy to suit our environment." So everybody gets the same Service-wide "framework" that they then tweak to suit their own needs, like Employment and Workplace Relations. So there'll be slight changes and variations between agencies.*

Concept - Government clients (govtclients):

The final concept underpinning the *cyberbullying* theme is labelled *govtclients* (government clients). As indicated by interviewee #15, this concept refers to the advantages and disadvantages, public servants perceive in applying cyber technology solutions to enhance customer services with internal and external government and non-government sector stakeholders, clients and customers.

Interviewee #15 enumerates the benefits of using cyber technology to form professional relationships with geographically dispersed stakeholders and clients/customers:

> *…my old department regularly have online forums and their using it as [customer] feedback tool. I'm very conscious, however, that this organisation has hundreds of thousands of clients and customers from farmers to other agricultural industries. And being able to tap into those networks and get a message out to them across rural Australia who may not be able to access more formal communication methods, is invaluable. So this department has a large social media branch that is looking mainly internally with less of an external focus.*

Interviewee #22 suggests that the enriched communication with customers and clients, as reinforced by work cyber platforms, has also enhanced public servants' vulnerability to negative cyber communications:

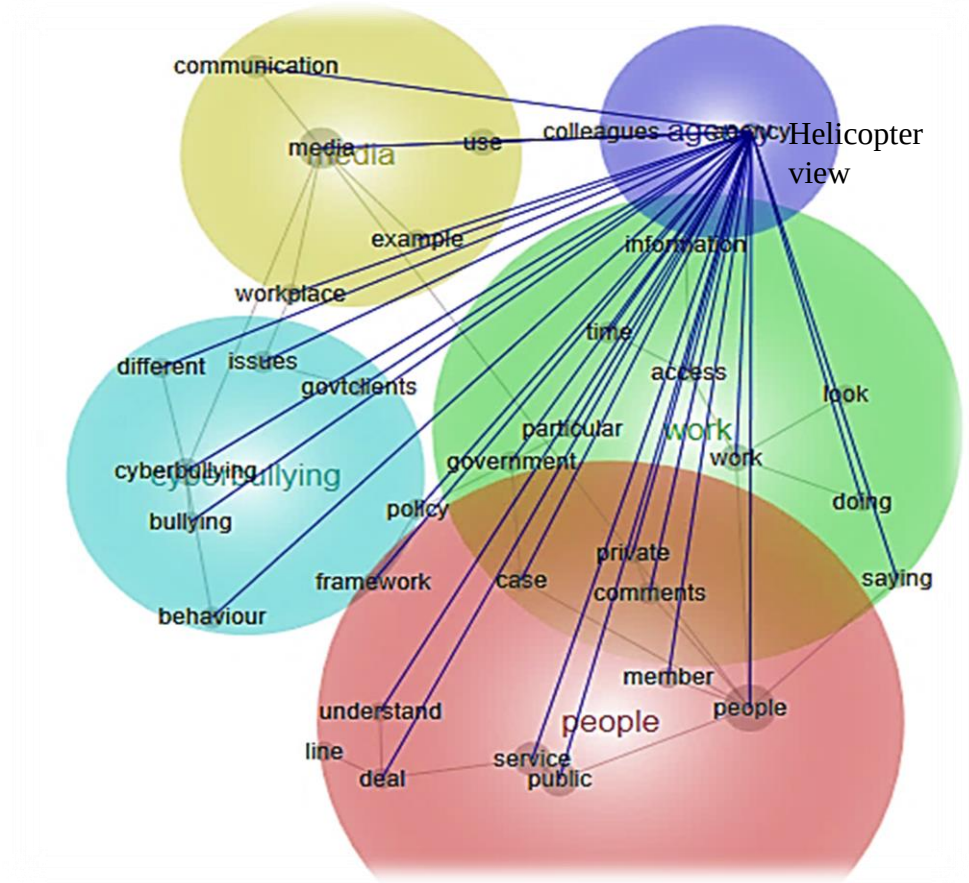
> *The working environment can absolutely make you more of a target for cyberbullying and harassment particularly the service delivery departments, the front line people are more at risk than the policy people that deal with big broad brush approaches ...Yeah, I think the work environment and the type of work message the area is delivering on behalf of the public service is a factor that will make them more vulnerable. And depending on who their audiences or clients are because some clients are more apt to jump onto different communication mediums to hit back and fire back and it's not actually conducive to them getting what they actually want.*

Interviewee #22 suggests government employees use social media to develop a "social licence." In this regard, agency Executives realise the need to use social media to conduct "live" research prior to officially announcing new government policy to pre-test lobbying groups and public opinion:

...And again with the giant super [fishing] trawler. So where the Department is trying to - what we call a "social licence" or "social context" - so [the Department] is trying to gauge the context of where the policy is going to sit, who's going to be for it, and who's going to be against it, that sort of thing, will it be noisy.

4.5.9 Theme Five | Agency

As shown by Figure 4.11 (refer to "helicopter view"), the fifth thematic circle, labelled *agency* and depicted by the colour dark blue, represents 3% connectivity and relevance and is the least connected and relevant theme. However, this theme is pivotal in illustrating employees' perceptions about the efficacy of organisation culture (i.e., legislation and policies enlivened through whole-of-service and agency-specific governance processes) in effectively intervening and preventing cyberbullying.



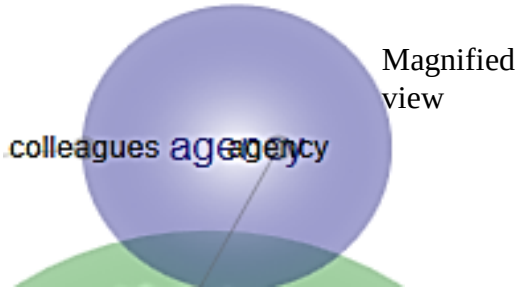


Figure 4.11. Thematic concept map: Theme entitled *Agency* taken from Study 1.

Figure 4.11 illustrates two concepts underpinning the agency theme. These underpinning concepts are entitled *agency* and *colleagues* (refer to "magnified view"). highlight interviewees' perceptions that public servants (including full time, part-time and contracted staff) work and are cyberbullied across all public sector organisations, departments and agencies. The *agency* theme is important as it illustrates public servants' perceptions about how supportive their organisation is in intervening and preventing online bullying. In this sense, the majority of the quotes in this theme regard how employees' feel that their workplace behaviour is bound by numerous employment-based legislative code of conduct mandates (*Public Service Act 1999, s.13*), policies, procedures, governance processes, all of which assist in developing an organisation's culture. This theme also points to a dichotomy between extant public sector codes of conduct (*Public Service Act 1999*) and actual workplace online behaviours. This theme's empirical evidence supports both research questions.

Concept - Agency:

These comments are associated with the *agency* concept and pertain to public servants' work environments (e.g., department, agency, organisation). The main narrative identified under the theme and concept entitled *agency* points to employees' perceptions that technology is making them increasingly accessible to clientele both during, and out of, normal work hours. Individual public servants, including members of the executive, managers and staff, are now more prominent in their official roles. Interviewee #16 illustrates the risks around this increased visibility, particularly in noting that, while regulatory boundaries and governance frameworks exist to control public and private cyber discourse, these are accidentally outweighed when government official's private online comments are used to disparage the government of the day:

I do my own job but am vulnerable as a consequence. I should be shielded behind the Twitter presence, which is government [such as] GOV2.0, so my personal identity is transparent. However the risks of this are that if you have an authentication problem or can be easily identified by a comment or Twitter [post], especially if only five or so people made similar comments on the same government site.

Interviewee #19 reflects on the increasingly risk averse culture, and politicisation of the public service, particularly when privately made online comments are used by the media or public against a member of the government:

Intervention in these matters is becoming difficult due to the increased politicisation of the public service... As a consequence there's increased competition between agencies and more in-fights about resources about who has what resources to support what activity.

Concept - Colleagues:

Commentary under the *colleagues* concept reveals unease by senior public servants around the increasingly public environment in which junior and senior public sector colleagues now operate. This point is reflected by interviewee #17:

I've never personally been the subject of being persistently pursued but I've certainly seen some of my colleagues who have….in particular the Senate Enquires and Senate Estimates process means that we [public servants] are now more visible, there's a face to the name and so people can hone in on particular issues and people, and this does represent a challenge for people moving into senior public servant roles and it requires new sets and resilience as it becomes more a public and American style of service. And social media plugs into that because you're given a name and a face.

Interviewee #24 reiterates more support measures are needed for public servants dealing with the exigencies of the new 24/7 cyber work environment:

What I've also noticed is that there's no respect for people's privacy by your colleagues anymore – there needs to be an increased awareness about people's privacy and some sort of communication or education about how to protect your personal privacy...People just think you're always accessible 24/7...

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the collection, analysis, and results from Study 1's transcribed data. Data collection, analysis, and results were conducted to address to the two research questions regarding the employees' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying prevalence rates (RQ1), and employees' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying affecting workplace stress levels, job satisfaction and performance, and organisational culture (RQ2).

The sequential exploratory mixed methods approach used in this research involved two phases – Phase 1 comprising two qualitative studies, and Phase 2 comprising one quantitative study. It was anticipated that the rich qualitative information would enhance the quantitative information (Bergman, 2008, 2010, 2011; Plano Clark, 2010). Study 1 used a convenience sampling frame taken from Commonwealth and local Australian Capital Territory public sector employees using a snowball sampling method to invite volunteers to participate in the interviews.

Participants' responses to the interview questions (Appendix B), supported both research questions. Thematic analysis using a lexical software tool, Leximancer (Smith, 2011), to identify the qualitative themes and concepts. As a result of the computer-aided lexical analysis, five themes were identified that substantiated the two research questions and confirmed that public servants' perceptions that workplace cyberbullying was manifesting in their organisations. In particular, public servants and their clientele (*people* theme) used a range of cyber platforms (*media* theme) to conduct work matters (*work* theme).

Empirical evidence confirmed public servants perceived workplace cyber platforms as enablers of online workplace bulling. Workplace cyberbullying was thus perceived as prevalent (RQ1).

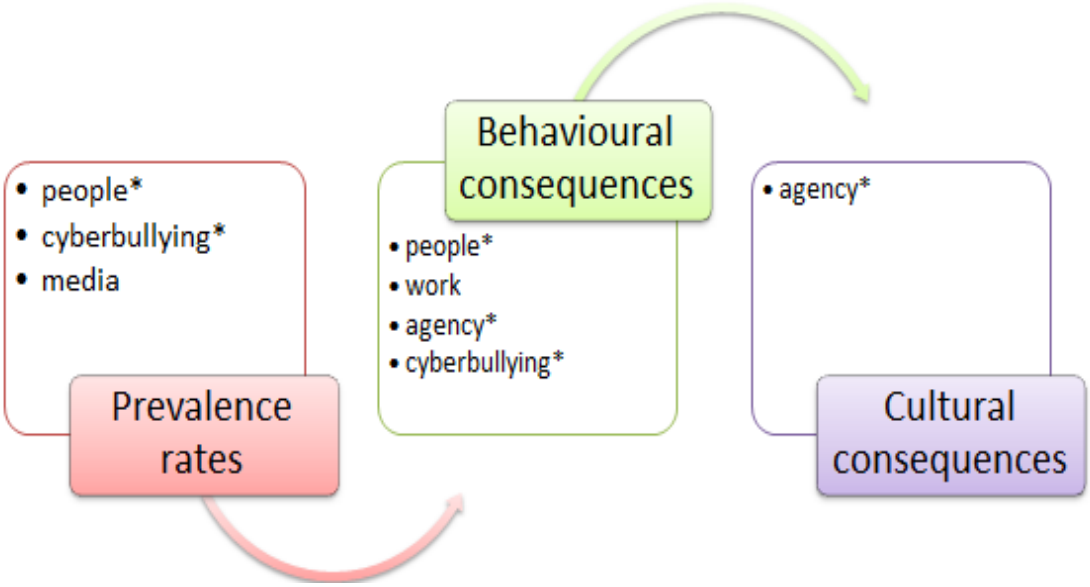


Figure 4.12. Thematic substantiation of the two research questions.

As shown in Figure 4.12, this behaviour occurred between internal employees and external non-government clients and created a number of organisational consequences. These included employees' reduced confidence in agency culture in effectively dealing with the phenomenon (R2: cultural consequences), and more individualised consequences relating to perceptions of decreased job satisfaction and performance and increased workplace stress (RQ2: behavioural consequences).

The five themes taken from Study 1, Figure 4.12 (p.169) were found to correlate to the two research questions regarding the prevalence and consequences associated with workplace cyberbullying:

- people – straddles both prevalence and behavioural consequences: RQ1 and RQ2 (7 concepts; the workplace positions of the perpetrators and targets act as a prevalence indicator, while the impact of workplace cyberbullying on employees is a consequence indicator),
- media – prevalence rates: RQ1 (5 concepts; assorted work-based cyber technologies used to convey bullying messages is a prevalence indicator),
- work – prevalence rates and behavioural consequences: RQ1 and RQ2 (12 concepts; task or workplace classification, that is the employees position at work, was perceived as a factor that increased employees vulnerability to cyberbullying and is a prevalence indicator, while the impact to

employees' stress levels, job performance and satisfaction is a consequence indicator),

- cyberbullying – prevalence rates and behavioural consequences: RQ1 and RQ2 (8 concepts; online workplace bullying communications and online behaviours were perceived as indicators of prevalence that resulted in consequence indicators), and
- agency – behavioural and cultural consequences: RQ2 (2 concepts; the impact of task- and person-related messages that were conveyed between employees within the agency and between private/public organisations impacting employees' perceptions of organisational efficacy in dealing with the phenomenon).

Crucially, SIP theory (Walther, 1992, 1996) helped explain how these themes were perceived by public servants. In progressing past the existing SIP theory, Study 1's empirical evidence demonstrated that cyber communications are not only interpreted by their group's accepted behaviours (covert culture), but also by their organisation's explicit (overt culture) exemplified through the code of conduct (*Public Service Act 1999*).

In conclusion, Study 1's empirical evidence indicates public servants perceive that workplace cyberbullying is manifesting in government organisations. Furthermore, government employees perceive that this workplace cyber-behaviour is impacting on workplace stress levels, workplace performance and job satisfaction. Study 1 also demonstrates that public servants currently perceive their respective organisational culture (e.g., laws, policies, governance processes) are relatively ineffective in fully supporting employees dealing with workplace cyberbullying events. The results and findings taken from Study 1 thus confirmed the focus and two research questions driving this research.

Chapter 5: Study Two: Qualitative Online Survey

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the collection methodology, analysis, and finding arising to Study 2's 127 survey responses. Study 2's findings are discussed comprehensively under Chapter 7, together the triangulated findings arising from Studies 1 and 3 are also discussed. Similar to Study 1, this study was developed in response to the core investigative theme and two research questions. The first research question sought to investigate Australian public servants' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying incidence, while the second question investigated its consequences in terms of its

impact on workplace stress levels, job satisfaction and performance, and organisational culture. Organisational culture relates to employees' perceptions as to the effectiveness of existing legislation, policies and governance processes in helping public servants deal with workplace cyberbullying.

As described in Chapter 3, a sequential exploratory mixed methods approach was used across two phases. In this regard Phase 1 encompassed two qualitative studies (Study 1's face-to-face interviews, and Study 2's qualitative online survey), while Phase 2 embraced Study 3s quantitative online survey. The three studies addressed the two research questions. This method enabled the triangulation of the rich qualitative material from Phase 1 to enhance the strong quantitative information arising from Phase 2 (Bergman, 2008, 2010, 2011; Plano Clark, 2010). Similar to Study 1, Study 2 used Leximancer (Smith, 2011) to conduct the thematic analysis. Given the amount of material provided by the survey respondents, the researcher included insightful extracts to illustrate and clarify each theme and concept. Chapter 5's ensuing sections encompass (a) participants, (b) procedure, (c) analysis, (d) results, and (e) conclusion.

5.2 PARTICIPANTS

A total of 127 respondents participated in Study 2's qualitative anonymous online survey. The socio-demographic and contextual characteristics of the qualitative anonymous online survey participants were tabulated as frequency distributions classified into groups in accordance with gender, age, employment status, and role. Public sector participants were sourced as a convenience sampling frame across the Local, State, Territory and Commonwealth Australian government agencies.

5.2.1 Participant Characteristics

Participants' socio-demographic and contextual characteristics consisted of 127 valid survey responses from a total of 152 responses, with 25 incomplete and invalided surveys. An unequal divide was observed between female (81, 63%) and male (46, 36.2%) participants. This sampling frame included a highly mixed spread of public servants across Local, State, Territory and Commonwealth policy and delivery agencies, and roles, such as analysts, administration staff, junior and senior management, heads of agency, and more. Respondents ranged in age from 23 to 67,

however notable peaks were observed at 27 to 36 (5, 3.3%; 6, 3.9%), 42 to 45 (7, 4.6%; 5, 3.3%), 48 to 58 (6, 3.9%; 8, 5.3%; 5, 3.3%; 5, 3.3%). Appendix D illustrates participants' demographic data.

5.3 PROCEDURE

The following subsections provide information on the procedure conducted for Study 2. Five subsections encompass this section and include: (a) collection method, (b) justification, (c) qualitative online survey, (d) survey design and validation, and (e) survey dissemination. The ensuing sections, entitled analysis and results, provide overarching and detailed information as to the analysis approach used in Study 2.

5.3.1 Collection method

Survey respondents were recruited using the snowball method, or non-probability sampling strategy, (Creswell, 2012; Punch, 2005), and used the web survey tool, Qualtrics (Hernandez, Shabazian, & McGrath, 2014). The survey was embedded as a live html link into public sector-specific group emails, Twitter and Facebook, including the unaffiliated online News weekly E-newsletter. These emails and web articles were nationally promulgated. This online newsletter reached public servants across all States and Territories. Participants consented to the survey via a segment of the online survey, and were advised as to the survey withdrawal process if they chose to remove their data.

5.3.2 Justification

According to Sue and Ritter (2007), online or web page surveys are regarded as a fast way of gathering sometimes hundreds, even thousands, of online responses. This may be more likely if the survey is posted on a popular website or online newsletter, or embedded into an easily accessible group email. Online participants are more likely to respond to an emailed or newsletter invitation within the first day of receipt, or within a few days. Given the anonymity of the survey conducted by Study 2's qualitative online survey it was deemed probable that participants would provide more honest answers to questions about highly sensitive topics, including sensitive workplace issues, within an anonymous survey (Sue & Ritter, 2007). Additionally, participants provide richer responses to open-ended questions on anonymous online surveys.

While online or web-based employee attitude surveys do not always reflect the general population as a whole, in this particular case the method is a valid option given the convenience sample consists entirely or almost entirely of computer and web-based users. This is a valid option even if a sample of web-based users are selected to match the general working population in terms of age, gender and other demographics (Sue & Ritter, 2007), as was attempted in this research. It is also true that participants can quit in the middle of an online or web-based survey, or the survey may lock up due to over use or bandwidth limitations therefore invalidating the responses due to incomplete surveys.

5.3.3 Qualitative online survey

During the period in which the researcher transcribed Study 1's face-to-face interviews, the researcher simultaneously conducted a series of collaborative correspondence to three international cyberbullying academics to determine the possible existence of a unique workplace cyberbullying questionnaire. This outreach did not identify a measure designed specifically for workplace cyberbullying (currently being developed by the UK), however was successful in providing a collaborative relationship with two UK universities (Sheffield and Nottingham). This collaboration was approved by UK and Australian universities, and assisted the researcher identify two validated survey instruments for both Study 2's qualitative survey and Study 3's quantitative questionnaire.

The qualitative survey instrument asked respondents to describe behaviours they perceived as cyberbullying act in their workplaces. These could include workplace behaviours they had experienced personally or acts they had witnessed.

This additional qualitative data enhanced the transcribed material obtained from Study 1 face-to-face interviews. It also provided additional insights into how Australian public sector employees perceived the prevalence and consequences of workplace cyberbullying in public sector agencies.

5.3.4 Survey design and validation

Study 2's qualitative online survey (Appendix E) was an additional qualitative collection method used to gather public service employees' perceptions (and consequences) of negative workplace cyber behaviours across the Australian public sector. The first segment of Study 2's online survey provided a brief introduction of

the researchers, and informed respondents as to the type of questions they should expect. Participants were advised twice as to the process by which they could withdraw from the survey and/or withdraw their information at any stage. Australian public sector's Employee Assistance Program and Life Line contact details were included, in the event participants experienced distress while completing the survey. This survey was tested for clarity and content validity by a small panel consisting of three QUT academics and ten employees from the public sector prior to national release. A workplace cyberbullying definition incorporated within this section included:

> …persistent, repeated negative behaviour enacted through communication technologies (e.g., phone calls, email, text message, social networking websites) by individuals or groups, which creates a hostile work environment. Over time, this impacts negatively on the person facing the behaviour and places them in an increasingly inferior position.
>
> (Appendix E, p. 387)

The second segment of the survey asked participants for generic descriptive information describing the most common types of work-based technologies used in their workplaces. Stage one of Hinkin's (1995) six step guideline was used to develop the questions that asked respondents to describe the types of workplace cyberbullying behaviours and acts they had witnessed or experienced in accordance with the survey's workplace cyberbullying definition. This segment of the survey thus sought the following information:

- Participants' socio-demographic and contextual characteristics (e.g., job role, employment years and hours worked per week (free text), and drop down menus for age, and gender).
- Six workplace technology options that participants had seen being used to convey bullying messages together with a free text "other" option (e.g., email, telephone calls, text messages, social media websites, video conferencing software (e.g., Skype) and instant messaging services).
- Three free text windows enabling respondents to describe observed or experienced examples of subtle, severe and "other" forms of workplace cyberbullying.

The combination of anonymity, low cost, ease of access for computer-enabled public servants were key attributes for this survey (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Online surveys particularly suited geographically dispersed public servants, who could flexibly access the survey from either work, home and mobile cyber platforms anywhere in Australia. This capability also ensured a broad dissemination across local, State, Territory and Commonwealth public sector agencies and workers, the majority of whom use a computer and/or have access to the internet-enabled mobile devices to conduct their work. The survey material substantially augmented the researcher's qualitative material on public servants' perceptions on workplace cyberbullying.

5.3.5 Survey dissemination

Study 2 was administered through group email, public sector online E-newsletter and public sector websites. The invitation to participate (Appendix C) was thus restricted to Australian public sector participants only. Participants' consent was obtained through a segment of the online survey. In this manner public sector employees working in local, State, Territory and Commonwealth government agencies were apprised of this survey. According to Hoel and Giga (2006), online surveys can quickly and cheaply collect substantial, quality material from geographically dispersed, literate and technologically conversant participants, such as Australian public servants. In this regard, Study 2's survey included a series of structured questions to cover participants' gender, age, duration of employment and so forth. Sampling limitations pertained mainly to bandwidth limits in rural areas, which resulted in the survey intermittently freezing, however the number of surveys completed obviated this as risk.

5.4 ANALYSIS

The subsections below detail the analysis approach and method used for Study 2. Subsections under the ensuing section 5.4.1 entitled analysis approach and method section encompass four foci. These include; (a) aim, and (b) lexical analysis software, (c) developing codes and themes, and (d) validity and reliability. The overarching thematic analysis process is explained in greater detail within the section 5.5.

5.4.1 Analysis approach and method

Similar to Study 1, Study 2's survey data was thematically analysed using a lexical software tool. In brief, Study 2's qualitative data was thematically analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006) using the lexical data mining tool, Leximancer (Smith, 2011). The researcher's rationale in using various excerpts and quotes against each theme and concept were two-fold. In the first instance, the excerpt or quote was lexically linked by the software to the relevant theme or concept under discussion. Secondly, any quote used further clarified or illustrated the relevant theme or concept.

Aim

Study 2 was developed to address the two research questions driving this research. Walther's (1992, 1996) SIP theory provided the theoretical framework through which Study 2's findings were interpreted. This survey was administered as a consequence of an information gap identified through the Literature Review. This gap indicated that, while the Australian public sector consistently reported annual face-to-face workplace bullying statistics (APSC, 2011; Comcare, 2012, 2014a, 2014b), very little is known as to the prevalence and consequences of workplace cyberbullying (D'Cruz & Noronh, 2013; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Privitera & Campbell, 2009; Smith et al., 2008) within the context of the Australian public sector. Additionally, current studies strongly indicate traditional face-to-face bullying represents a key predictor of cyberbullying (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). In this regard, Study 2 was conducted to determine public servants' perceptions about workplace cyberbullying prevalence rates and consequences.

Lexical Analysis Software

Background into why Leximancer (Smith, 2011) was used in this research can be perused in Chapter 4, section 4.4.1, entitled lexical analysis software. Phase 1's two qualitative studies were similarly analysed using Leximancer. In summary, and as indicated in Chapter 4, Leximancer represents a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) package that incorporates a computer-aided text analysis (CATA) capability that automatically analyses text-based material (Smith, 2003, 2011).

Developing codes and themes

Detail regarding the development of codes and themes using Leximancer (Smith, 2011) can be found under Chapter 4, section 4.4.1, entitled developing codes and themes. However, to summarise, Study 2's text-based survey material was encoded using Leximancer to form word and concept lists, which developed four key themes (Penn-Edwards, 2010). In this regard, the software automatically conducted a sequential, semantic and relational process that extracted high frequency words (i.e., words that were counted the most times) that were transformed into word lists and concepts for the synonym listing (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). The software generates a concept and thematic map provides a visual display of co-located, "like" themes, where highly significant themes are heat-mapped in "hot" colours (e.g., red) against less interconnected and relevant themes (e.g., yellow).

Validity and reliability

In considering the validity parameters of the Leximancer (Smith, 2011) software platform, such as stability, reproducibility, correlative and functional validity, particularly when compared to manual content analysis methods, Grech, Horberry, and Smith (2002) found that elements of this software tool were statistically comparable. Furthermore, Smith and Humphreys (2006) compared the software's reliability, reproducibility and validity to Krippendorff's (2004) four validation dimensions and found an improved level of certainty. Given the University of Queensland's copy write and intellectual property rights, Leximancer's back-end algorithms used to process the text for concepts and overarching themes and develop the visual relational map are unable to be viewed. Further detail regarding Leximancer's validity and reliability can be found under Chapter 4, section 4.4.1, entitled validity and reliability.

5.5 RESULTS

The sections above represent the collection and analysis methodology used for Study 2 qualitative survey data. This section includes the findings from the collected survey material, and is crucial as supporting evidence in addressing the two research questions guiding this research that were developed using lens of social psychology. Consequently, the subsection below are entitled (a) introduction, (b) thematic

summary, (c) theme one: emails, (d) theme two: messages, (e), theme three: bullying, and (f) theme four: sent.

5.5.1 Introduction

The focusing theme that shaped this dissertation asked, what is the prevalence, and what are the consequences, of negative workplace cyber communication (cyberbullying) in the Australian public sector? The two research questions stemming from this focus theme examined government employees' perceptions regarding the prevalence rates and consequences of workplace cyberbullying. This research sometimes refers to workplace cyberbullying as "negative workplace cyber communications" as the latter term was suggested by senior public servants as more acceptable within the context of this research. Additionally, the terms "workplace cyberbullying" and "online bullying at work" were used interchangeably. In summary, this section comprises Study 2's qualitative results and displays four themes and underlying concepts. The results taken from these themes and concepts provided evidence in support to the two research questions.

5.5.2 Thematic Summary

The lexical analysis derived from the qualitative anonymous survey generated four themes; these are displayed in order of priority in Figure 5.1.

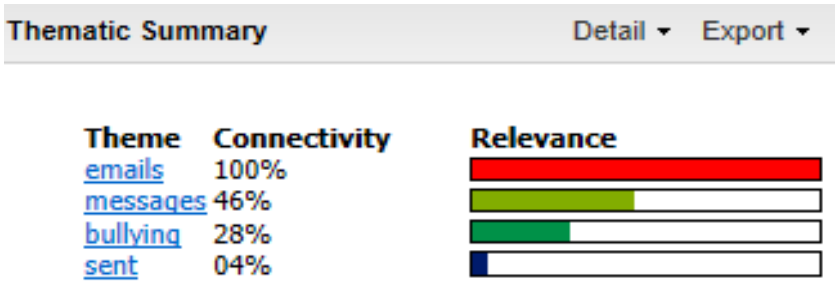
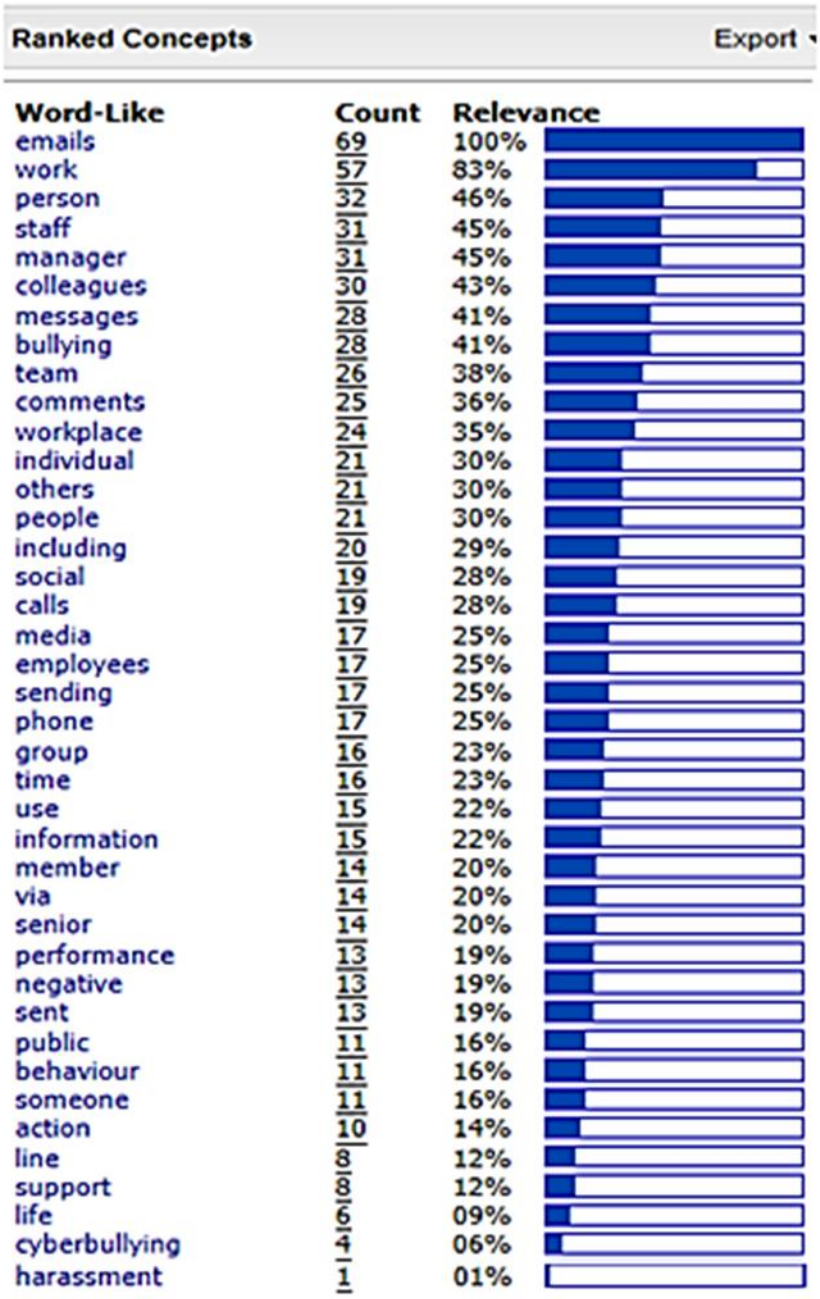


Figure 5.1. Thematic summary: Study 2's four themes, connectivity and relevance.

As shown in Figure 5.1, the four themes developed from the Study 2's qualitative anonymous online survey represent how participants perceive workplace cyberbullying. Study 2's four thematic connectivity and relevancy aggregates are displayed in terms of their importance within the context of the survey data. For example, the theme entitled *emails* is rated 100% and represents the most linked theme in terms of the number of connected words and concepts. The four themes developed from Study 2's survey material include: *emails* (100% connectivity and relevance), *messages* (46% relevance and connectivity), *bullying* (28% connectivity and relevance) and *sent* (04% connectivity and relevance).

Table 5.1.

Conceptual summary of Study 2's qualitative anonymous survey



Ranked Concepts — Export

Word-Like	Count	Relevance
emails	69	100%
work	57	83%
person	32	46%
staff	31	45%
manager	31	45%
colleagues	30	43%
messages	28	41%
bullying	28	41%
team	26	38%
comments	25	36%
workplace	24	35%
individual	21	30%
others	21	30%
people	21	30%
including	20	29%
social	19	28%
calls	19	28%
media	17	25%
employees	17	25%
sending	17	25%
phone	17	25%
group	16	23%
time	16	23%
use	15	22%
information	15	22%
member	14	20%
via	14	20%
senior	14	20%
performance	13	19%
negative	13	19%
sent	13	19%
public	11	16%
behaviour	11	16%
someone	11	16%
action	10	14%
line	8	12%
support	8	12%
life	6	09%
cyberbullying	4	06%
harassment	1	01%

Table 5.1 displays columns entitled “word-like”, “count” and “relevance”. According to Leximancer Manual Version 4.0 (Smith, 2011), these lists represent the number of times text segments are coded to a particular concept. Therefore, the highest scoring concept is positioned at the top of the list. Furthermore, conceptual connectivity, relevance and count provide a measure of correlative validity load against each concept (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). In this regard, Table 5.1 shows the preeminent theme, entitled *emails*, positioned at the top of the list, was counted 69 times across the transcribed corpus and displayed a connectivity relevance percentage of 100% across the full data set. In other words, the theme entitled *emails*

is deemed the most important theme identified by the 127 surveyed participants from Study 2. Table 5.2 lists these themes with a thematic and conceptual narrative.

Table 5.2.

Study 2's four themes: Thematic and conceptual narrative

Themes	***Thematic and conceptual narrative***
Emails	The behaviours displayed when using work-based cyber technologies viewed as most likely used to convey bullying messages. This theme is supported by 21 concepts and is highlighted as the most significant and highly connected and relevant (100%) factor perceived by the interviewed participants. This theme overlaps with the messages (conceptually overall with use, person, including and comments) and bullying (conceptually overlap at use and action) themes to create a narrative indicative of work emails sent to cyberbullying messages to bully colleagues, staff etc. messages (the type and content of inter and intra work-related messages).
Messages	The types bullying online messages conveyed across cyber platforms. This theme supported by 11 concepts, is highly connected with 46% connectivity an relevance, which heavily overlaps with the bullying (conceptual overlap at employees and use) and emails (conceptually overlap at use, person, including and comments) themes.
Bullying (online)	Contributing online workplace actions and behaviours. This theme is supported by 12 concepts, is the next most significant theme at 28% connectivity and relevance, and overlaps *messages* (conceptual overall at employees and use) and *emails* (conceptual overlap at use and action) to create a similar narrative to that depicted in *emails*.
Sent	The act of sending messages across inter/intra organisations. With two underlying concepts, this is the least significant theme at 4% connectivity and relevance with no thematic overlaps due to the theme's neutral action orientation regarding cyber platforms as enablers of online bullying.

These four themes closely parallel those identified from Study 1's face-to-face transcribed material. Just to reiterate, Study 1's five themes include: *people* (positions/roles of perpetrators and targets), *media* (the type of work-based cyber technology in cyberbullying), *work* (type of person and task-related messages), *cyberbullying* (online workplace bullying behaviours), and *agency* (organisational tasks, procedures, culture etc.).

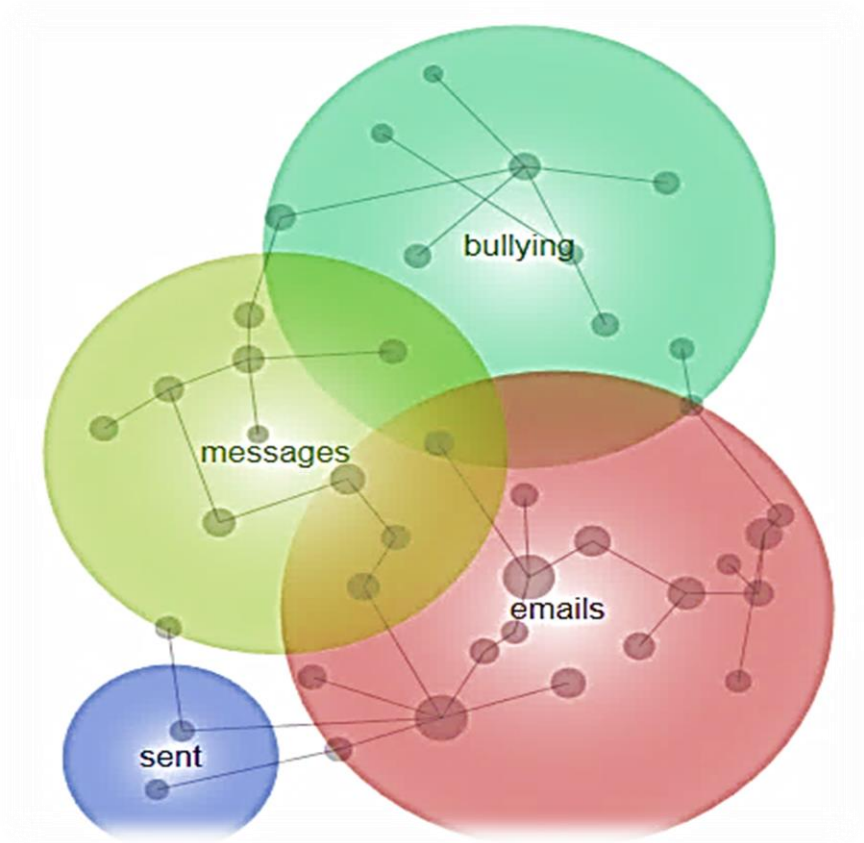


Figure 5.2. Concept map: Study 2's four themes, connectivity and relevance.

Figure 5.2 displays a concept map generated by Leximancer (Smith, 2011). This map provides a visual display of Study 2's four main themes. Each theme is represented as a circle that is heat-mapped so overlapping, large and bright circles indicate highly interconnected themes, while smaller circles that are not overlapped by other circles indicate less interconnected themes (Smith, 2011). Figure 5.2 demonstrates that the theme entitled *emails* is depicted in the colour red and this represents, again, that this theme is deemed by survey respondents as the most connected and relevant. The second "hottest" theme is entitled *messages* and is depicted in yellow, and the subsequent themes are entitled *bullying*, depicted in the colour green, and *sent*, depicted in the colour blue.

This last theme does not intersect with any other thematic circles. Indeed, the theme *sent* represents participants' perceptions that the transmission of negative workplace cyber communications is different to the negative workplace online behaviour. In this regard, survey respondents perceive cyber technologies as an enabler of cyberbullying communications (Carlson & Zmud, 1999; Muhl, 2003; Romm & Pliskin, 1997). Within the context of the overall narrative, this theme represents an enabling conduit through with bullying-type cyber-messages are

conveyed, and at a conceptual level is therefore parallel to Study 1's theme entitled *media*. Analysis of the four thematic narratives have been described in detail below within the context of their interconnectedness and justified through the descriptive summaries. These following sections provide an extensive evaluation of the transcribed material and language underpinning each theme and their interconnectedness and concepts. Leximancer (Smith, 2011) provided the researcher with the ability to quickly delve into and investigate the data and the participants' use of terminology and how this shaped each theme. Thematic and conceptual interconnectedness is illustrated through the use of descriptive text-based quotes taken directly from the transcribed material.

5.5.3 Theme One | Emails

Figure 5.3 depicts the largest thematic hotspot arising from Study 2's survey material, entitled *emails*. This theme substantiates RQ1 and RQ2.

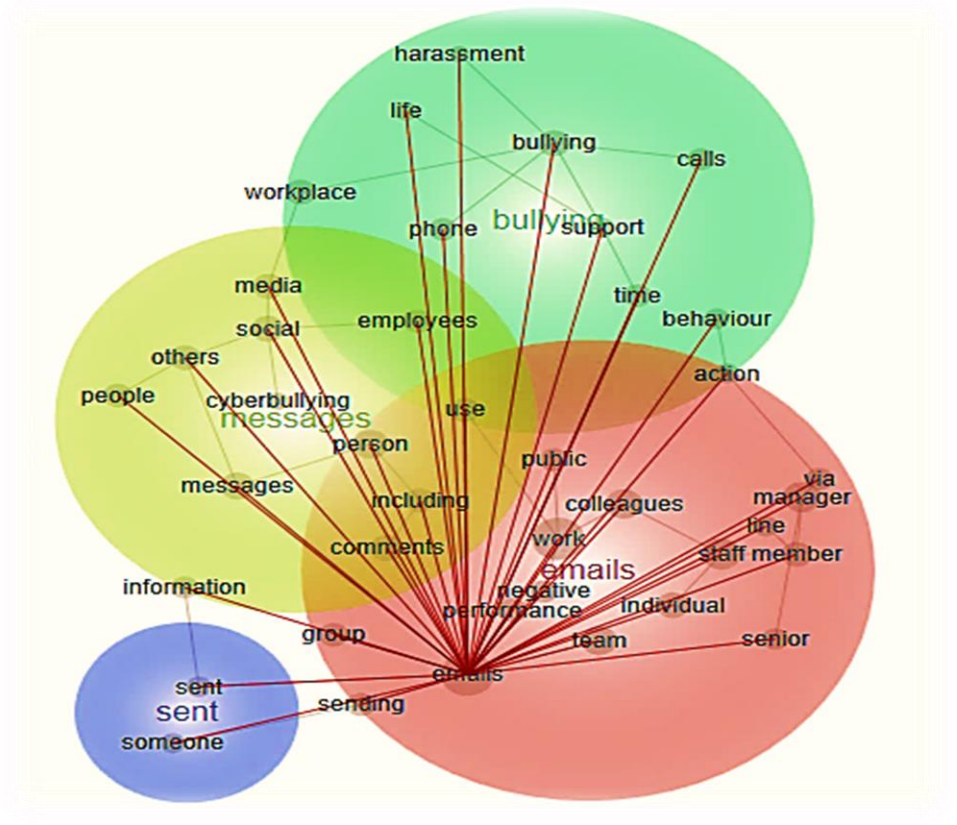


Figure 5.3. Thematic concept map: Theme entitled *Emails* taken from Study 2.

Twenty-one concepts underpin the *email* theme. These include, *emails, work, staff, manager, colleagues, person, team, individual, member, performance, group, sending, action, public, use, via, negative, including, comments, senior, line*. Two

main relationship streams can be seen linking a number of interconnected concepts via grey lines, all of which can be viewed in Figure 5.3. The left side cluster occurs between *emails, comments, including* and *person*, thus illustrating participants' perceptions regarding workplace emails that include bullying comments. The larger right side cluster links *emails, performance, negative, work-use, colleagues, public, staff/individual/team, line, manager, member, senior,* and *action.*

This narrative threat illustrates employees' views that cyberbullying emails arise from performance management processes, and from internal colleagues, staff, managers and senior executive and external members of the public. While these concepts are discussed in depth below, in brief these concepts illustrate the importance public sector employees place on email to connect with one another as individuals, colleagues, managers, teams, groups, on important matters such as work performance with their bosses or managers, on important matters such as work performance, and also externally to the public. It is important to note that internally-based emails between government employees are not anonymous, and are rarely anonymous from externally-based stakeholders and clients. The empirical evidence from Study 2 addresses both research questions.

Concepts – Email and Work:

The themes entitled *email* and *work* in many respects correlate to the *media* concept found from Study 1. Study 1's theme, entitled *media,* identified email and a range of other technologies such as social media websites and iPhones as key enabling cyber tools used in inter and intra organisational communication.

In this regard, Appendix I illustrates quotes extracted from Study 2's survey respondents that corroborate Table 5.3.

Table 5.3.

Workplace cyber technologies identified by Study 2

Workplace cyber technologies used by public servants	Frequency (n = 127)	%
Email	127	100
Telephone calls	125	98
Text messages	56	44
Social media websites	36	28
Video conferencing software	46	36
Instant messaging services	54	42

Table 5.3 displays the six key technologies survey respondents indicated were widely used at work. These text-based survey responses were loaded into IBM SPSS version 20.0. These statistics show that, of the 127 responses, 100% claimed they had been targets of workplace cyberbullying over work email, while 98% experienced the behaviour during work-based telephone calls. A quarter of those surveyed reported experiencing cyberbullied from workplace text messages (44%) and/or other instant messaging services (42%), while the remainder experienced online bullying across work video conferencing software (36%) or work-based social media websites (28%). These statistics enliven this research by illustrating public sector employees' perceptions about how cyber tools are seen as both enablers of inter and intra workplace communications, and represent another avenue to convey online bullying at work.

The *work* concept demonstrates public servants' perceptions regarding the perceived erosion of work ethics and general lack of team trust and *esprit de corps* as a consequence of task-related cyberbullying or online harassment from supervisors, bosses, colleagues occurring during work or home hours. While it is unclear whether public servants view out of hours work requests as part of a normal working life, it is clear that the online bullying behaviour from other government employees and external clients is viewed with hostility, anxiety and stress. Emails can include comments or messages to others aimed at embarrassing, ridiculing or defaming the recipient as indicated survey respondent #1_87 who wrote, "A Facebook comment that I made on my private Facebook page was shared on the work email, and I found out when a friend pointed it out to me. Receiving rude or disparaging emails from

my clients." These cyber communications are often conducted under the guise of work-based messages by government colleagues or external clients, and are aimed at personally criticising the recipient.

This sense of person-related cyberbullying is described under the *emails* concept by survey respondent #1_145 who stated, "Aggressive and abusive language use in emails on a continual basis. Every time I saw one of these emails it would destroy my confidence and ability to work effectively." These extracts portray perceptions held by Australian public sector employees that online workplace bullying and harassment both originate from workplace emails, and can be promulgated outside normal work hours. This point is extrapolated by survey respondent #1_20 who claimed, "Sending emails out of [work] hours - 10 pm at night. Always makes you feel that you don't work hard enough." Further extracts in support to these claims are induced from the survey extracts below:

> Survey Respondent #1_251: "Hostile emails from my director sent from his Blackberry after he had left the office for the day. These emails would be critical of some aspect of my work on that day and (usually) give terse instructions on remedial action."
>
> Survey Respondent #1_268: "Using group emails within a work unit to disparage the efforts of team members in an implied or indirect way."
>
> Survey Respondent #1_269: "Copying emails and replies to people outside the unit in which I work in an attempt to scare me into dropping the subject. I must say this merely inflames me further."
>
> Survey Respondent #1_51: "emails purporting to be a positive instructions aimed at improving a work matter but including other senior people etc. as a Cc so that it beings a negative overview to their mind."
>
> Survey Respondent #1_217: "Repeated emails criticising me both professionally and personally and my decision-making by one of the senior members of the team I supervise and copying it in to my supervisor and subordinates. Some of these emails are sent to my work email after hours s they are the first thing I see when I open my email in the morning and then I have to spend the better part of the day dealing with them which impacts on my productivity of my normal work."

Concepts – Senior, Line, Manager and Staff and Action:

The *senior, line, manager, staff* and *action* concepts were represented by the participant responses below and demonstrate perceptions by staff about their managers (normally from Executive level 1 and 2 through Senior Executive Service Bands 1, 2 and 3). These concepts relate to perceptions about managers' use of email as an enabling tool to convey belittling, aggressive or cyberbullying messages, as indicated by survey respondent #1_105 who wrote, "I have had situations where my senior manager has castigated me for not "following the correct channels" i.e., delegations in emails."

Survey also respondents reveal dissatisfaction of this behaviour, particularly given the cyber behaviour occurs during both work and non-work hours. These concepts also demonstrates relatively new organisational expectations that certain junior staff be available at any time of the day or night, weekday or weekend. These concepts also pertain to public servants' perceptions regarding a team or group's culture that appears to espouse aggressive online communication and behaviour, particularly arising from supervisors (managers) to convey as derogatory or abusive emails that are perceived as threatening, humiliating or embarrassing by the subordinate. This claim is substantiated by survey respondent #1_388 who described, "Indirect threatening emails from senior management when raising concerns or speaking up."

Other degrading behaviours are perceived by employees as culturally acceptable, either within the team/group or by the organisation, and are thus more difficult to prevent, as indicated by survey respondent #1_396 who asserts, "Emails from management in relation to our responsibilities and obligations (for secrecy) which are more than just telling us to suck eggs, with veiled or implied threats of criminal conduct (within a government agency)." Supervisors and managers are perceived as using workplace cyber technologies to isolate and exclude certain staff members from team or group emails. The consequences of this behaviour are many. This behaviour is reported by employees' as increasing workplace stress, particularly in those occasions when the excluded staff member is left wondering what is going on starts to second-guess themselves, causing resentment and a subtle erosion of self-confidence, as posited by survey respondent #1_46 who states,

The practice of cc'ing all and sundry on email including senior officers - I have seen many people write hostile and/or demanding emails where they will include their manager, your manager, and possibly those managers" managers as well as a range of other in order to bully you into taking a particular course of action. It's a subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle form of intimidation and I particularly resent it when it's done to those junior officers who are my direct reports.

Public sector employees also describe how this type or level of negative workplace cyber behaviour erodes their perceptions of trust, both in their boss and in the organisations' leadership, as conveyed by survey respondent #1_240: "The silent treatment from supervisors - being kept out of team discussions et cetera. Forwarding emails from colleagues or managers and including comments such as "wtf?" These threads are further illustrated by the extracts below:

Respondent #1_97: "…[bullied by] email and was advised by human resources to log the emails, and when the issue was made official, was told by her boss and the mediator that she was underperforming and is now being performance managed."

Respondent #1_106: "[email] circulated to either several other managers, and recently to very senior management. The wording has been such that I am portrayed as a persistent offender, when in fact I have been well within my rights to elevate these issues."

The concept entitled *senior* and *line* identifies an organisational culture that empowers supervisors and bosses and influential staff to communicate threatening, accusatory emails to their colleagues and direct reports. These behaviours are substantiated by survey respondents numbers 1_105, 1_388 and 1_46 who wrote respectively; "I have had situations where my senior manager has castigated me for not "following the correct channels" i.e., [incorrect] delegations in emails…", "Indirect threatening emails from senior management when raising concerns or speaking up.", and "The practice of cc'ing all and sundry on email including senior officers ...in order to bully you into taking a particular course of action. It's a subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle form of intimidation and I particularly resent it when it's done to those junior officers who are my direct reports."

Furthermore, survey participants report this culture is both accepted and embedded within their government agencies and imbue participants with feelings of powerlessness. This point is illustrated by the survey respondents below:

> Respondent #1_217: "Some of these emails are sent to my work email after hours."
>
> Respondent #1_108: "At no time have I ever had any direct HR intervention action actioned by my senior managers, which presumably, if my conduct was not in line with proper protocols then I would be formally reprimanded. I have felt this is an attempt by this particular manager to cow me into submission and not raise "uncomfortable" issues."
>
> Respondent #1_307: "Threatening to report actions to a very senior staff member, e.g., CEO."
>
> Respondent #1_253: "My director was entitled to his opinion, but on the occasion he wrote "the CEO was not impressed with today's presentation," I was able to challenge his view because I had had a one-on-one conversation with the CEO after the presentation and the CEO had been very positive both about the presentation and the top line recommended actions arising. I communicated this in a reply email to my director and included (cc'd) our Branch Head (SES1) into the email."
>
> Respondent #1_212: "I have had a colleague approach me to advise that, even though their line manager was sitting directly beside them, all was provided to them via email. When the staff member asked their line manager to provide additional support or take the time to explain the request in more detail, the line manager would always claim to be too busy."

Concept – Colleagues, Team and Group:

The concepts entitled *colleagues, team and group* represents employees' regarding the effect of cyberbullying on their work performance as illustrated by survey respondent #1_217 who wrote,

> *Repeated emails criticising me both professionally and personally and my decision-making by one of the senior members of the team I supervise and copying it in to my supervisor and subordinates. Some of these emails are sent to my work email after hours so they are the first thing I see when I*

open my email in the morning and then I have to spend the better part of the day dealing with them which impacts on my productivity of my normal work.

Survey respondents claim workplace cyberbullying by supervisors, colleagues and subordinates and lead to the targets feeling inadequate, and fearful that their professional reputation is degraded as a result, as highlighted by survey r respondent #1_111, who claimed, "Belittling comments in emails, feedback on a mistake being sent to the whole team via email as an example." This concept supports RQ1, that public servants experience cyberbullying, and RQ2, that this cyber behaviour impacts employees' perceptions about work stress, job satisfaction and performance.

Respondent #1_244: "Being excluded from team group emails especially those dealing with future planning discussions and some social events (e.g., lunches to farewell a team member)"

Respondent #1_337: "I'm the only female in a team of male employees, the only employee of an obvious ethnic background/the only disabled employee. Producing false emails to support allegations where no such communications previously exist."

Respondent #1_416: "Manager directs feedback via email from group of team leaders to one team leader re his subordinates' performances (many emailing one). This is delivered in detail as each case arises, resulting in many per day."

The *colleagues* concept is illustrated by a number of survey responses which indicate that staff – as work colleagues – use email to cyberbully one another to exclude, undermine or gossip. This form of interaction illustrates how a team or group can isolate a particular member of a team who potentially is not viewed as fitting their team or group. Such isolating behaviour can be expressed in a number of forms, such as social isolation and exclusion, where the target may not be included into a whole-of-team email as indicated by survey respondent #1_171 who stated, "Within a team, sending each other emails discussing a colleague behind their back."

It can also include emailed abuse, where colleagues email abusive or disparaging messages about a team member, as claimed by survey respondent #1_12: "A person regularly sending emails on a work matter to a group of colleagues (including yourself), routinely includes a disparaging comment or joke about you."

Alternatively, examples can include person-related emails that are viewed as inappropriate, as indicated by survey respondent #1_168 who wrote, "Gossiping about work colleagues on work email and then having someone forward on the email chain to that individual. Sending inappropriate emails to work colleagues (in and out of work hours) that criticise their work performance/decisions they have made, their personal lives or their looks." This person-related cyberbullying is also raised by survey respondent #1_149, who states, "blind copying individuals into work emails that have content which may be of a personal nature to the person it is addressed to, e.g., BCC copying a colleague into a disciplinary email to another staff member when really it has nothing to do to with the person..."

The *group* concept portrays public servants' interest in how email can impact targets' self-confidence and self-perceptions of highly regarded performers, particularly if the cyberbullying incorporates a mix of task-related and person-related derogatory online remarks that are promulgated to a wide audience. The consequences of this type of mass broadcast agency-wide cyberbullying is "difficult to deal with at a personal level" These threads are highlighted by survey respondent numbers 1_263, 1_13, 1_393, 1_268, 1_386 and 1_389 respectively:

> Respondent 1_263 "members criticising one's work or performance and others within the team joining in - in an email in which the victim is part of the email group."
>
> Respondent #1_13: "Emails from each of a group of people in your office over a period of time that seem to have a common interest in repeatedly criticising your personality, work and ability. This can be very difficult to deal with at a personal level."
>
> Respondent #1_393: "One other person in this group also sent a long e-mail attacking me."
>
> Respondent #1_268: "Using group emails within a work unit to disparage the efforts of team members in an implied or indirect way."
>
> Respondent #1_386: "A small clique got it into their heads that I should be doing some part of their job as part of my job. There were a series of e-mails from various members to me along the same lines, so obviously they had been discussing this amongst the group."

Respondent #1_389: "Receiving an initial very long e-mail in capital letters directly attacking myself and actions and decisions I had made, cc'd to a large group of peers."

Concepts – Person, Individual and Member:

The concepts entitled *person, individual* and *member* express employees' concerns regarding their exposure to cyberbullying from angry and frustrated external clients and customers, such as members of the public or staff/employees from other government and non-government organisations. This point is highlighted by survey respondent numbers 1_412 and 1_204 who report, "Angry emails from members of the public who are frustrated with service or perceptions of service failures and who are sometimes mentally unwell. They are generally not targeted at individuals, more a level of frustration at the bureaucracy.", and "When I was working in the fraud team I was directly impacted by a customer cyber-bullying me." This point is further illustrated by the extracts below, which also describe how this workplace cyberbullying is perceived as impacting public servants:

Respondent #1_75: "being bombarded with emails, text messages from an [externally based] individual "threatening" action if a positive response is not received to their request."

Respondent #1_170: "Sending an unwarranted amount of "badgering" emails/texts to an individual - these emails have content which is above board but are designed to corrode the other individuals' self-worth and degrade their performance in the long term) perhaps in the hope they will find work somewhere else."

Respondent #1_24: "No repercussions or accountability for the behaviour of the individual."

Respondent #1_16: "Email sending [by someone external to the organisation] of offensive material (including pornography) to the workplace in order to embarrass or harass the individual."

The concept entitled *member* features a communication characteristic of public sector workplace that has been noted in other conceptual discussions, whereby work directives and instructions are conveyed via email from a supervisor to a staff member/employee, irrespective of the close proximity of the communicators. The

four survey responses below highlight this idiosyncrasy, which has been touched upon within other concepts, as this "hands-off" management style is often perceived by employees as rude:

> Respondent #1_6: "Giving directions to my staff by email when they should make the request via me and then harassing that staff member by email to comply."
>
> Respondent #1_23: "Expectation as a senior staff member that I would deal with it."
>
> Respondent #1_202: "When the staff member provided the work the line manager asked for, they were told it was not up to standard and/or was not what they wanted. This detail was also advised via email."
>
> Respondent #1_322: "This sort of email has the impact of signalling to a team that the work of that individual is not seen to be important in the eyes of the manager. The fallout of this kind of behaviour is similar to that experience by a staff member who receives a negative email from a manager who copies in work colleagues, albeit this is much more subtle."

The concept, entitled *person,* is significant as it illustrates how geographically dispersed and isolated employees deal with the intense cyberbullying behaviour, and how these behaviours are perceived as being enabled through the agency's implicit culture (norms, values and beliefs). This point is demonstrated by survey respondent #1_83 who wrote, "email overload when priorities don't allow you to respond to emails, being bombarded with trivial emails by one person in a position of power where you feel you have to respond constantly but that it will affect your progress on meeting other deadlines." Additionally, public servants describe how offline or face-to-face behaviour is replicated across online technologies, and thus increasing the potential of broadcasting the workplace aggression to a larger audience, as described by survey respondent #1_320, who wrote, "Controlling, shout (abuse) at a person in front of others and replicating this in [email] correspondence.". In such cases, employees report the challenge of proving themselves innocent and of the difficulties regaining their professional reputation. These threads are further illustrated by the extracts below:

Respondent #1_345: "Email confrontation where more than person is tagged to receive the email, thereby, creating peer pressure. Curt directives with a sense of power/menace about them."

Respondent #1_124: "omitting a person from an email recipient list if that person should be included in the conversation."

Respondent #1_134: "openly accusing a person by email (cc'd to their superiors) of supposed behaviours (which they have not done) and threatening them with disciplinary action in that email."

Respondent #1_61: "Emails with deliberately false recollection of conversations that show person in a negative light."

Respondent #1_113: "Being threatened [or], having someone threaten to harm another person or self-harm … in email."

Respondent #1_141: "Copying a variety of people in to an email conversation in which the author berates the person to whom they are sending the email."

Respondent #1_154: "Emails sent to General Manager that indicated I had not attended a meeting of a particular group (information sharing with no decision making responsibility) when the person had no idea of the circumstances (I was preparing an urgent cabinet submission briefing). It was like I was being "dobbed in.""

Concepts – Performance and Use:

The *performance* and *use* concepts illustrate employees' impressions of how email can be used to undermine their professional reputations and career aspirations. Within the context of workplace performance discussions, emails are perceived as a way of subtly, undermining employees by officially ridiculing targets' work performance. This workplace cyberbullying is perceived as particularly damaging if it is made within the context of annual or bi-annual "performance management" discussions. These discussions and text-based correspondence officially report employees' professional proficiency and ability to deliver results, both of influence perceptions as to the employees' potential career opportunities and/or annual pay increments. These points are highlighted by survey respondents 1_96, 1_91, 1_97 and 1_343, who write:

Respondent #1_96: “Emails that are unreasonably critical of performance or accusatory in language.”

Respondent #1_91: “My SES Band 2 was known to use emails as evidence of incompetence against his direct reports without their knowledge ... during their bi-annual performance discussions.”

Respondent #1_97: “was told by her boss and the mediator that she was underperforming and is now being performance managed.”

Respondent #1_343: “Bullying is often masked as part of the “performance review” process...”

Respondent #1_292: “The key thing that makes this a subtle bullying behaviour is that the recipient is unaware of what is going on, and generally only becomes aware if they somehow receive information when applying for a promotion or when their performance is being assessed, which alerts them to the negative opinions about them that are being spread around the workplace.”

Concepts – Including and Sending:

The *including* and *sending* concepts illustrate concerns by public servants dealing that work colleagues, supervisors, team members or staff can include or cc any other group member when sending emails that slander, harass and bully a target anywhere, anytime. Employees perceive that this behaviour erodes work – life balance, as indicated in the following extracts:

Respondent #1_39: “Not sure if this counts; however, a former supervisor would forward endless emails to me, including ones I had been cc’d on. At no time did she ever explain why she was sending these and I often spent as much time working out what I was supposed to do as did actually doing the task.”

Respondent #1_196: “writing “funny” comments next to photos of you and sending them to other workmates.”

Respondent #1_365: “Withholding information that you have requested and/or deliberately sending the wrong information.”

Respondent #1_391: “After being spoken to this person followed up by sending e-mails directly to me, or to other people with myself cc’d. The comments were both slanderous and libellous and personally very hurtful.”

Concept - Public:

The concept entitled *public* provides a number of survey responses indicating the sense of powerlessness experienced by public servants as a consequence of externally-based and sometimes anonymous, workplace cyberbullying. These elements are highlighted by survey respondent numbers 1_412 and 1_101 who wrote respectively, "Angry emails from members of the public who are frustrated with service or perceptions of service failures and who are sometimes mentally unwell.", and "I still don't know who emailed my private Facebook comment around at work in the public service as this probably breached the *PS Act*."

This concept also illustrates public servants' perceptions that, while numerous policy and legislation exists to protect them in the workplace, these processes appear to struggling to cope with changing organisational and customer expectations, particularly in regards to personal privacy versus work identity. These points are described by the extracts below:

> Respondent #1_99: "Frontline staff are having their work performance publicised on YouTube by disgruntled clients (public) who are unhappy with the longer waiting queues at Centrelink and Medicare."
>
> Respondent #1_312: "Clients posting negative or derogatory comments about staff on line, providing personal details of staff members, misrepresenting what actually happened in order to make staff appear wrong or incompetent, publishing official correspondence from staff online and out of context, making threats that this will happen to other staff members in the course of their duty, in order to intimidate staff, or. raise their organisations profile as "fighting" the government."

Concepts - Via and Negative and Comments:

The concepts entitled *via, negative and comments*, exemplifies how workplace cyberbullying can be indirect and ostensibly appear (at face-value) positive, yet flag negative under-tones about an individual or group. This element is points to both task-related and person-related cyberbullying and is illustrated within the quotes below :

Respondent #1_64: “Abusive emails containing personal insults or negative comments regarding behaviour or character (e.g., dishonest, unprofessional etc.).”

Respondent #1_284: “Email where the message can be interpreted in several ways including a negative way. Repeatedly using that style of writing in emails by the same sender.”

Respondent #1_51: “emails purporting to be a positive instructions aimed at improving a work matter but including other senior people etc. as a cc so that it brings a negative overview to their mind.”

Respondent #1_418: “This avalanche of nit picking negative feedback (never positive) inundates the recipient. This manner of feedback is unsophisticated and does not address trends in errors, nor the underlying reasons for them.”

Respondent #1_249: “Email addressed to a group but with negative comments about one of the team.”

Respondent #1_322: “This sort of email has the impact of signalling to a team that the work of that individual is not seen to be important in the eyes of the manager.”

5.5.4 Theme Two | Messages

Figure 5.4 shows the second largest thematic hotspot generated from the transcribed corpus. This theme, entitled *messages*, is depicted by the colour yellow-lime, is underpinned by 12 concepts in black writing and supports both research

questions. Thematic connectivity and relevancy aggregates are 46% in terms of their importance within the context of the data. For example, the theme entitled *emails* is rated 100% and is thus the most prominent and highly relevant theme for this study.

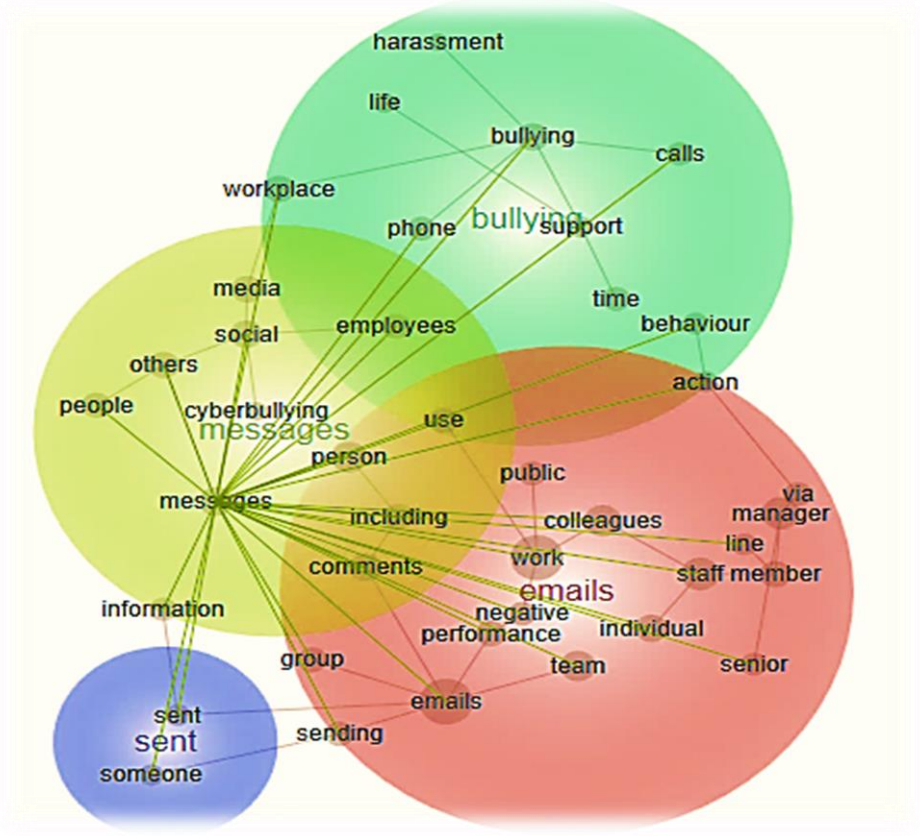


Figure 5.4. Thematic concept map: Theme entitled *Messages* taken from Study 2.

The 11 underpinning concepts support this theme include: *messages, comments, social, media, others, including, use, people, employees, information,* and *cyberbullying.* As shown in Figure 5.4, the yellow-lime lines linking this theme to the four other themes demonstrates this theme is significantly interconnected.

This theme displays conceptual overlapping between the *emails* and *bullying* thematic circles, and it is clear that the *use* concept is jointly shared across these three themes. The *message* theme represents public servants' perceptions that aggressive and bullying messages, conveyed by workplace technologies represent inappropriate and potentially risk organisational behaviour. Indeed some employees' articulate very specific concerns regarding their perceptions in how this cyber behaviour breaches of public sector codes of conduct, enshrined in the *Public Service Act 1999*. In brief, the figure illustrates public sector employees' perceptions regarding the internal and external sources of workplace cyberbullying, and the

challenges around workplace CMC. This point alludes to the elements described by the SIP theory (Walther, 1992) whereby the lack of text-based social cues in professionally-based CMC compels users to interpret cyber-messages within the context of accepted organisational behaviour and culture.

The sections below provide empirical evidence in support to the two research questions posed by this study. These questions relate to whether public sector employees perceive workplace cyberbullying in their organisations, and whether this behaviour influences their perceptions regarding job satisfaction and performance, stress levels and the efficacy of supporting organisational processes.

Concepts – Cyberbullying, messages and Comments:

The *cyberbullying*, *messages* and *comments* concepts are enlivened by participants' responses below, which examine the content of the cyber communications. This cyber content is often initiated by the employees' clients/customers, supervisors and colleagues and promulgated across the cyber platforms, such as emails, text messages, instant messaging, Facebook and so forth. The notion that cyber content is often bullying is expressed by respondent number 1_375 who states "replace the word bullying with terms like "uncivil, inappropriate, &/or unacceptable behaviour." Employees also expressed the view that this cyber communication signifies a fundamental lack of respect that undermines employees' professional reputations. The points raised under this concept further reinforces this study's two central questions regarding public sector employees' perceptions as to the prevalence and consequences of workplace cyberbullying. These issues are more are raised in these quotes extracted from the survey material

According to the surveyed participants, the content of these messages include derogatory, harassing (including sexually harassing) and abusive emails to threaten, humiliate or embarrass a staff member. These issues are more are raised in the quotes below, as extracted from the survey material:

> Respondent #1_233: "Using instant messaging to sexually harass workplace colleagues, by constantly sending unwelcome messages commenting on how sexy the person looks, or insinuating in the messages that the person must be "asking for it" by the way they have dressed, noting the person lives on their own so must be in need of company."

Respondent #1_151: “Making inappropriate personal comments, especially if this is repeated.”

Respondent #1_179: “Demeaning comments in electronic communications.”

Respondent #1_64 “Abusive emails containing personal insults or negative comments regarding behaviour or character (e.g., dishonest, unprofessional etc.).

Respondent #1_318: “Social media (Facebook) to harass me ...included derogatory comments, abuse and threats.”

The concept entitled *messages,* which underpins the theme, labelled *messages*, relates to the types of messages now conveyed across workplace cyber technologies and between government employees, and with clientele. In this regard, survey respondents perceived cyber technologies’ capacity to provide immediate feedback without any moderating effect (such as text-based social cues), and to foster accepted negative online workplace behaviours (Walther et al., 2005). An accepted aggressive workplace culture, combined with high levels of work stress, can lead employees’ to misinterpret offline and online messages and result in bullying (Grigg, 2010). These negative online workplace behaviours could be conducted in full “view” of a group of witnesses (e.g., witnesses who are cc’d into an email or are connected to the same Facebook website). Similarly, these negative online workplace behaviours could also be conducted quietly, between the perpetrator/s about the target (behind the target’s back), or between only the perpetrator and target. In this regard, Study 2’s survey quotes illustrate the types of workplace cyber messages that public servants perceive as hurtful, libellous, behaviour:

Respondent #1_190: “Colleagues all situated on-site (sitting in the same building/location) using their instant messaging to have private conversations about others in the same location.”

Respondent #1_70: “Using workplace instant messaging system to constantly make derogatory comments about a person. i.e., X could replace Y as Santa, they are certainly the right shape for it.”

Respondent #1_79: “Using workplace instant messaging system to put down person you are supervising (i.e., this person is totally useless)”

Respondent #1_142: "Reading out messages posted on the intranet discussion boards and laughing out loud or discuss loudly and disparagingly about the author's comments behind their back or sometimes within earshot."

Respondent #1_257: "Instant messaging- either being ignored or sent messages in regard to how you should do things in a non-constructive manner."

Respondent #1_281: "Text messages from senior staff that attack you personally, for example "What were you thinking? I couldn't have made myself plain - talking to you is like talking to a moron."

Respondent #1_290: "Gossiping on private instant messenger chat networks. Whilst the recipient of the bullying behaviour is unaware of what is going on, there is still damage being done to their reputation."

Concept - Social and Media:

The s*ocial* and *media* concepts refer to employees' perceptions about the potential for perpetrators to use work and private cyber technologies to "name and shame," stalk, harass, and otherwise distress individuals, as indicated by survey respondent 1_56, who wrote, "They trawled through my posts, which there was one about IBS and they copied and pasted it onto an email and sent it around the office. I was then "targeted" during a workplace meeting on using social media to vent about things."

External perpetrators are also perceived as using public servants' private online posts, made across personal (non-work) websites and social media, to castigate a government decision-maker, as illustrated by survey respondent #1_247, who stated "Comments posted on social networking sites where clients state their version of events and include my full name and contact details, particularly when a decision or outcome has been negative for the client." Facebook posts are particularly viewed as nefarious given the potential for perpetrators to "snoop" on other team members' personal websites and social media, and to circulate any allegations in an effort to control the target copy and paste a post into a workplace email and then promulgated across teams, group or agencies. These activities are described by the quotes below:

Respondent #1_363: "nasty online gossip and chat. allegations made against you by online media and perhaps circulated to others."

Respondent #1_327: "Snooping/stalking employees outside the workplace particularly through social media sites."

Respondent #1_48: "I have also seen lots of people comment about others from their workplace on social media such as Facebook and use it to gain power and control over others in the workplace."

Respondent #1_93: "A person at work posted a picture of a gay employee on the work collaboration website (like Facebook) and made rude comments about the employee - it was eventually removed."

Concepts – Information, Others, Including and Use:

The *information*, *others*, *including*, and *use* concepts were considered together as part of a single narrative. The survey extracts below reiterate the negative and abusive content included in emails and other cyber communication media to government employees and external clients.

Respondent #1_36: "Cc'ing others in who should not be a party to the conversation."

Respondent #1_361: "Including hurtful messages, images or videos. imitating others online to set them up."

Respondent #1_257: "Have witnessed people writing inappropriate things to others or about others."

Respondent #1_69: "Excluding a person from anything that others in a similar role would be party to, be it information, invitation, etc."

Respondent #1_116: "Selected team members receiving emails and others not receiving them (not just work related emails but friendly emails as well)."

Respondent #1_284: "Email where the message can be interpreted in several ways including a negative way."

Respondent #1_300: "Ostracism - use of email to exclude workers from work-related communication."

Respondent #1_200: "This then indicates to those others on-site, who are excluded from the conversation, that it is happening. If you are the only one not included in this on-line conversation, you not only feel excluded, but also

paranoid that the conversation is about you (otherwise why would you not be included?)."

Concepts – People, Person and Employees:

The final concepts listed under the *messages* theme are entitled *people, person* and *employees,* and is similar again to the *people* thematic and concept interview findings. Both concepts allude to the impact of workplace cyberbullying on public servants. Language used by four extracts provided from surveyed participants include "it really messes with your head" and "the blogging world reinforces, maintains and locks them [cyberbullies] in to their wallowing in and perpetuating their anger, rage, determination to retaliate and destroy the people who hurt them." These extracts are provided in detail below:

> Respondent #1_314: "When criticising govt decisions, making the criticism personal, not just about the policy. Describing people based on race, creed or religion."
>
> Respondent #1_368: "It is like the cyber-world of blogging etc. supports self-harming. The blogging world reinforces, maintains and locks them in to their wallowing in and perpetuating their anger, rage, determination to retaliate and destroy the people who hurt them."
>
> Respondent #1_31: "It is the subtle stuff that really messes with your head as it is generally hard to prove the person, and people are very covert."
>
> Respondent #1_305: "Manipulative telephone calls, veiled threats, callers calling repeatedly and quickly, e.g., asking for something and then within two minutes phoning back to ask if it's done, and if not why not, insisting on holding on to the telephone line while we make enquires or following up on a task. Talking about people behind their backs."

5.5.5 Theme Three | Bullying (online)

Figure 5.5 shows the third most interconnected theme, entitled *bullying* (online) and depicted in green, and represents 28% in terms of its thematic connectivity and relevancy aggregates. This theme supports the two research questions posed by this study.

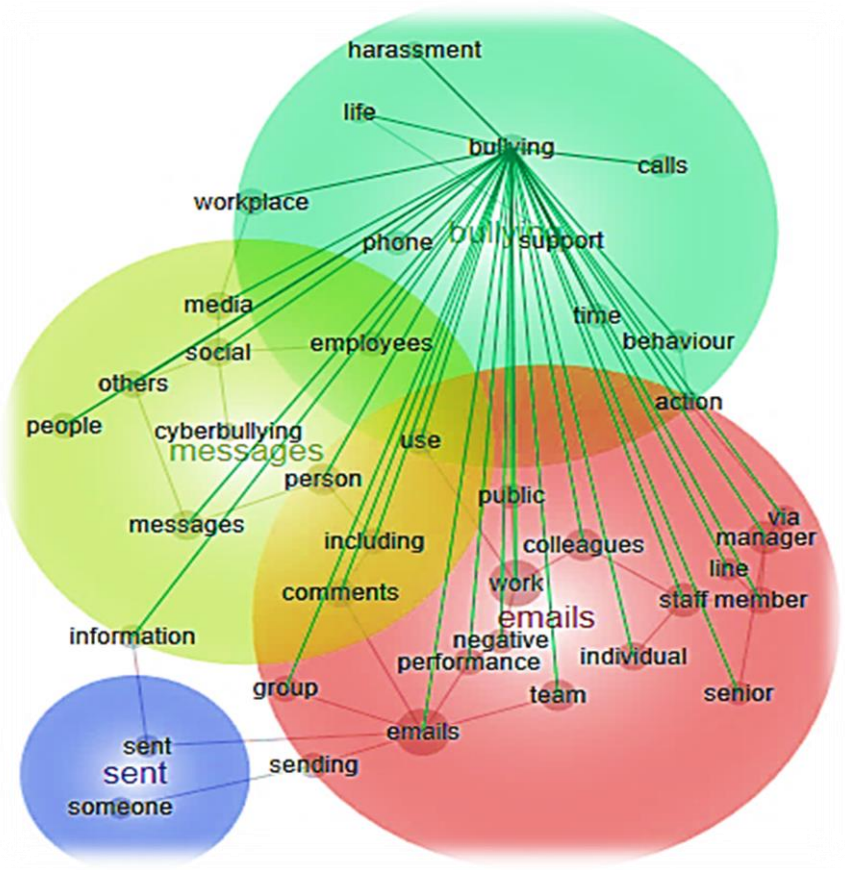


Figure 5.5. Thematic concept map: Theme entitled *Bullying* taken from Study 2.

This figure displays a number of green lines linking this theme to the two themes entitled *emails* and *message*, and is thus significantly interconnected. However, no thematic overlaps are observed between the *bullying* and *sent* thematic circles. In this instance, the *sent* theme represents cyber platforms as a neutral enabler, while *bullying* pertains to a human social behaviour, and thus explaining why connectively between the two themes is only observed through the *information* concept, where information (including bullying information) is sent to harass the target. This theme relates to both research questions.

As shown in Figure 5.5, this theme is supported by 12 concepts including *bullying*, *employees*, *workplace*, *use*, *phone*, *time*, *calls*, *behaviour*, *action*, *support*, *life*, and *harassment* as displayed. These concepts illustrate public servants' concerns around workplace cyberbullying behaviour infiltrating work and life (private) environments that may be conducted any time during the day or night, and can incorporate invasive work requests for support via phone calls, text messages and more (further detail below). In this manner the *bullying* theme is analogous to the

Study 1's face-to-face interview theme entitled *cyberbullying*, which contains the concept entitled *bullying*.

However, unlike Study 1's cyberbullying theme, the survey data has developed a theme for bullying that does not contain the cyberbullying concept. In fact, this *cyberbullying* concept is located within the *messages* theme. The justification for this difference is detailed in the discussion below. However, in brief, as noted in the previous thematic introductions, Figure 5.5 illustrates a thematic overlap across the *messages* and *emails* thematic circles. The employee concept is shared between the *bullying* and *messages* themes, the *action* concept is shared between the *bullying* and *emails* themes, while the *use* concept interacts with all three thematic circles (as previously discussed in the above thematic findings). While these thematic and conceptual overlapping are described in greater detail in the sections below, they are succinctly epitomised by survey respondent #1_96, who described workplace online bullying messages – or cyberbullying – as being sent across, and involving, a variety of cyber platforms;

> *Destruction or removal of colleagues work/electronic documents. Placing of employee accounts into misconduct/suspended status which is publicly accessible to all staff via a directory search ahead of an investigation into workplace misconduct. Shutting down workplace forums or information exchange services because of an alternative view of a subject. ...Denigrating work colleagues in social media. Sending emails that state no further discussion will be entered into, particularly in relation to contentious topics. Hacking of colleagues online profiles. Removal of/reduction in employees access to technology, particularly in relation to obligations of that employee to complete electronic documents/respond to emails. Publishing/distributing information protected by privacy laws. Distribution of email materials targeting specific minorities, particularly where it is related to an obvious minority within the immediate work environment. In this context a minority can be person with a single trait in the work environment i.e., the only female in a team of male employees, the only employee of an obvious ethnic background/the only disabled employee. Producing false emails to support allegations where no such communications previously exist.*

Concepts – Workplace, Bullying, Behaviour and Harassment:

The *workplace, bullying, behaviour* and *harassment* concepts indicated public servants' perceptions that workplace bullying and harassment behaviours tend to occur interchangeably. Indeed, the interchangeable nature of these notions are further expressed by survey respondent #1_375 who states, "replace the word bullying with terms like "uncivil, inappropriate, &/or unacceptable behaviour." The naturalisation of online bullying communications and behaviour at work is further described by survey respondent #1_49, who noted, "Cyber bullying is very common in the workplace. Anyone who would usually "bully" usually finds a way to target someone using social media or other technologies."

Public servants note the variety of cyber platforms used by clients and customers, and government colleagues/supervisors to intimidate, threaten and intimidate, bully and harass public sector employees – colleagues. This point is raised by survey respondent #1_210, who wrote, "nasty/mean emails intended to intimidate, threaten and intimidate me. Because of the increase in bullying/harassment of customers, I left this job (a job I was not only good at, but also really enjoyed) and moved to a role where there was zero customer contact." Out-of-hours workplace cyber communications is perceived as disrespectful and aligned to workplace cyberbullying, particularly if the work issues under discussion are non-urgent or administrative in nature, as indicated by survey respondent #1_85, who wrote, "not sure if it's bullying - but a lack of respect that personal time is needed over the weekend and matters can (usually) wait." Employees discuss the consequences of workplace cyberbullying, as illustrated by survey respondent #1_31, who claimed, "As a result of bullying I developed irritable bowel syndrome so other code names were "windy" etc." Survey respondent #1_223 wrote about the consequences of workplace cyberbullying on the work team:

> *This is creating unrest in our formerly harmonious team as the bully tries to justify his attacks on me and divide the team to either "take my side" or "take the bully's side." I have also had to involve my supervisor who has given me his full support and had to take formal action against the bully.*

The points raised under this concept further reinforce this study's two research questions regarding public sector employees' perceptions as to the prevalence and consequences of workplace cyberbullying and are demonstrated by the survey extracts below:

> Respondent #1_228: "…I try to deal with these issues by talking privately with the bully. The rest of my subordinates can't help but be aware of this challenge and lack of respect due to our open plan layout and small close nature of our team and are watching to see how I deal with it."
>
> Respondent #1_379: "If you feel bullied, you are bullied. It is about human behaviour in human relationships."
>
> Respondent #1_420: "Poor management results in bullying. If I was less generous I would suggest it is a deliberate bullying ploy."
>
> Respondent #1_29: "I had left a previous workplace due to bullying and I was then targeted by other in the new workplace who knew the person I stood up to in the last workplace."
>
> Respondent #1_375: ."..tend to replace the word bullying with terms like "uncivil, inappropriate, and/or unacceptable behaviour."
>
> Respondent #1_55: "This was one of my more severe experiences in the workplace above. I made a post some time before becoming friends on Face book with one person at the above workplace. They trawled through my posts, which there was one about **[identifier removed]** and they copied and pasted it onto an email and sent it around the office. I was then "targeted" during a workplace meeting on using social media to vent about things. My email was not targeting anyone from the workplace but repeated passive aggressive emails."
>
> Respondent #1_193: "One of my colleagues was removed from the workplace as a result of complaints made and they are now in constant contact with other staff via Facebook providing their side to the story about how badly they were treated. These staff now make it difficult for the person acting in the role through their behaviour in questioning every action the person acting is taking."

The *behaviour* concept highlights perceptions that workplace bullying and cyberbullying perpetrators appear to avoid punishment. This perception is raised by survey respondent #1_24, who wrote, "No repercussions or accountability for the behaviour of the individual attacking the behaviour of staff under investigation where it is fully known who the topic." Employees perceived this lack of organisational support as an enabler, as indicated by the survey quotes below:

> Respondent #1_292: "The key thing that makes this a subtle bullying behaviour is that the recipient is unaware of what is going on, and generally only becomes aware if they somehow receive information when applying for a promotion or when their performance is being assessed, which alerts them to the negative opinions about them that are being spread around the workplace."

> Respondent #1_322: "The fallout of this kind of behaviour [cyberbullying] is similar to that experience by a staff member who receives a negative email from a manager who copies in work colleagues, albeit this is much more subtle."

Concept – Life and Employees:

The *life* and *employees* concepts provide an insight into public sector employees' concerns that the new workplace expectation of being available 24/7 and is viewed as having an impact their private lives and the consequences to employees' health. This point is illustrated by survey respondent 1_353 who wrote, "Continuing to fret about what happened and to fight for justice and punishment for the perpetrators at some point becomes an exclusive habit and will eventually make your life even more toxic and irretrievably damage your health.". Additionally, online bullying by internal or external perpetrators are perceived as tarnishing the target's workplace, personal life, beliefs, and privacy, as reflected by survey respondent 1_15 who wrote, "Using your name and photograph on a Facebook or Twitter account to make adverse personal comments or observations about your life, beliefs, work situation or particular incidents may not only breach privacy, but also have serious work ramifications in a Government office."

Concepts – Phone and Use and Support and Calls:

The *use, phone, support* and *calls* indicates public servants' perceptions around how work-based phone calls are used by other government employees (colleagues and supervisors) and/or external clients (members of the public) to verbal abuse, intimidate and bully employees both during work hours or at home (after normal work hours). This narrative stream is reflected by survey respondents 1_95 and 1_402, who wrote respectively, "One of my staff received a phone call from my boss, the Senior Executive Band 1, who then swore at her over the phone for a full five minutes. I worked with an executive assistant to the CEO in a public service agency who felt she was being bullied by her immediate boss," and "Being abused verbally on the phone by clients including swearing, name calling and sometimes threats." Phone calls are potentially perceived as challenging due to the fact that, unlike text-based cyberbullying, phone calls are less likely to automatically generate text-based records to use as corroborating evidence

Public servants identify phone calls as sometimes challenging and personally confronting, even if these calls are not necessarily overtly threatening or abusive, but consistently initiated out-of-hours by supervisors. This point is exemplified by survey respondent 1_311 who states, "Repeated phone calls when off duty, when the subject matter is not part of the job or not urgent," and survey respondent who wrote, "While on leave over the Christmas/New Year period, subject to constant phone calls on a minor administrative matter in respect to my out of office message. The person (as director) told a junior project officer to make these calls over a three week period and were made every second or third day." Overall, phone calls initiated by other government officials or external clientele are perceived as potentially aggressive and threatening, as indicated by the survey extracts below:

> Respondent #1_62: "Yelling and swearing in phone conversation (that are always denied)."
>
> Respondent #1_17: "Screaming abuse over the phone because individuals" expectations were not met - these expectations were never promised or indicated would transpire."
>
> Respondent #1_138: "Hanging up the phone on someone. Using offensive language or an aggressive tone."

Respondent #1_113: “Being threatened on the phone, having someone threaten to harm another person or self-harm on the phone or in email. Being racially vilified on the phone.”

Respondent #1_130: “While on leave over the Christmas/New Year period, subject to constant phone calls on a minor administrative matter in respect to my out of office message. The person (as director) told a junior project officer to make these calls over a three week period and were made every second or third day.”

Respondent #1_152: “Being on the phone to a customer and discussing (sometimes loud enough for other team members to hear) disparagingly about a colleague’s actions, e.g., “No, I wouldn’t have done that myself but unfortunately you dealt with so and so,” “He shouldn’t have does that, it is against procedure, you should lodge a complaint,” “Well he/she is pretty hard to get along with so I understand what you are saying about how they treated you.”

Respondent #1_248: “Verbal abuse on calls.”

Respondent #1_305: “Manipulate telephone calls, veiled threats, callers calling repeatedly and quickly, e.g., asking for something and then within two minutes phoning back to ask if it’s done, and if not why not, insisting on holding on to the telephone line while we make enquires or following up on a task. Talking about people behind their backs.”

Concept - Time:

The *time* concept illustrates employees’ perceptions that workplace cyber communications allow supervisors or colleagues to manipulate an outcome or silence a target. This online communication is perceived as harassing and bullying behaviour as indicated by survey respondent 1_76, who wrote, “Making repeated requests for large amounts of work to be done in a short time frame.”

This narrative stream is also reiterated by survey respondent numbers 1_41 and 1_108 respectively:

(1_41): *It got to the stage where I had to steel myself each morning to open my email inbox because I didn’t know what unpinned email hand grenades*

the women had left me. Most of the time what she was doing was shifting the responsibility to me because she did not know what to do.

(1_108): *At no time have I ever had any direct HR intervention action actioned by my senior managers, which presumably, if my conduct was not in line with proper protocols then I would be formally reprimanded. I have felt this is an attempt by this particular manager to cow me into submission and not raise "uncomfortable" issues.*

Concept - Action:

The *action* concept is represented by three quotes pertaining to public servants' reliance on fair and transparent organisational processes in dealing with cyberbullying events, and how these processes are seen as ineffective, as indicated by survey respondent 1_147 who states, "As a person of long term experience in public policy it was incredibly difficult to deal with this. I did report it to the General Manager but no action was taken." Some participants profess a level of anxiety in how changed working conditions enable any public sector employee (managers, executive and staff) to be subjected to legal action by a client, as illustrated by survey respondent 1_259, who wrote, "Persistent harassing phone calls and threatening messages re bad events happening to me or threats of legal action against me."

These findings support the argument raised by this study that existing public sector policy and governance processes may be ineffective in dealing with the new range of cyber behaviour and thus undermine public sector worker's perceptions regarding the efficacy of their organisation to handle these matters. This narrative threat is articulated by survey respondent 1_287; "Using fear of job insecurity to compel addition work to occur outside of work hours through continued requests for action via blackberry."

5.5.6 Theme Four | Sent

As shown in Figure 5.6, the fourth and final theme, labelled *sent*, represents the least interconnected topic, in that the blue lines are not linked to all the concepts within the other three themes. Nevertheless, this theme is significant and represents 4% in terms of its thematic connectivity and relevancy aggregates. This theme corroborates the second research question posed by this thesis.

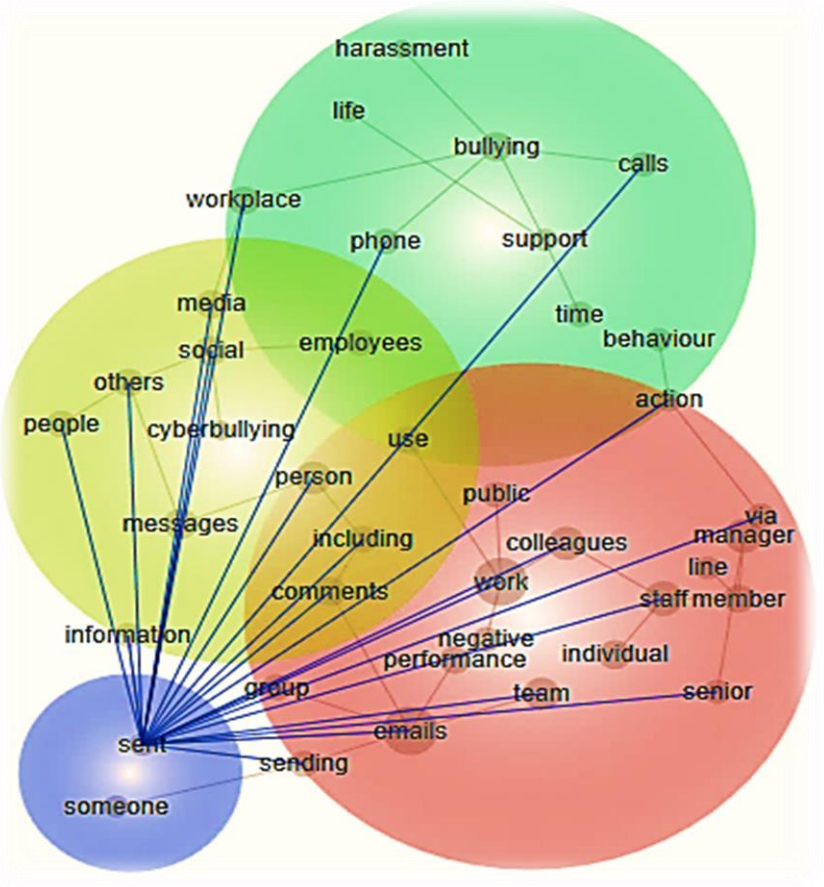


Figure 5.6. Thematic concept map: Theme entitled *Sent* taken from Study 2.

In this regard, the *sent* theme pertains to an outcome and/or product of public sector work life whereby professional relationships are generally facilitated through some form of CMC and demonstrated through the theme's two concepts: *sent* and *someone*. These two concepts are also somewhat similar to the concepts identified within the Study 1's concepts entitled *agency* and *colleagues*.

In brief, this theme and two concepts provide further evidence in support to the RQ1 posed by this research regarding employees' perception of cyberbullying manifesting across public sector agencies. Figure 5.6 shows that, while there is no thematic overlap with this theme, the theme's two concepts entitled *someone* and

sent are highly interconnected and prevalent within the context of workplace cyberbullying. This theme reflects cyber technology as facilitating public sector workers to send cyberbullying messages and relate to RQ2.

Concepts – Someone and Sent

Both concepts are illustrated by the six survey excerpts below, all of which support the premise offered by the RQ1 pertaining to the prevalence of workplace cyberbullying in the Australian public sector. These concepts underpin employees' perceptions that workplace bullying and harassment mostly arise from an implicit perspective that the dissemination and promulgation of aggressive workplace messages are culturally acceptable. Aggressive workplace cultures are alluded to by survey respondent numbers 1_122 and 1_255 respectively, who asserted; "Terse responses to friendly emails that have been sent," and "From this point on, I adopted the policy of including the Branch Head into any replies I sent to abusive/hostile emails from my director and, yes, eventually he stopped."

Furthermore, this cyber behaviour can also undermine junior supervisors in front of staff and colleagues as implied by respondent #1_101: "One of my personal Facebook comments was shared by one of my Facebook friends with my boss and human resource manager without my knowledge, and my boss called me into his office the next day and asked me what I meant by my private post which I then had to explain. I still don't know who sent my private Facebook comment around at work in the public service as this probably breached the *PS Act*." Further survey excerpts substantiate this conceptual thread:

> Respondent #1_140: "Unwillingness to communicate verbally face-to-face with someone and using email as the only way to communicate with them."
>
> Respondent #1_234: "Always dealing with someone by email or text rather than having telephone or face-to-face conversations."

5.6 CONCLUSION

This summary provides a synopsis regarding the collection and analysis, results taken from the data generated from Study 2's 127 online survey responses. Data collection, analysis, and results, were conducted in response to the two research questions relating to the prevalence rates and consequences of workplace cyberbullying. The sequential exploratory mixed methods approach used in this

research involved two phases, as it was anticipated the rich qualitative information would enhance the quantitative information (Bergman, 2008, 2010, 2011; Bryman & Bell, 2011; Plano Clark, 2010). A nationally-based convenience sampling frame was taken from Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local public sector employees using a range of whole-of-Australia online and offline public sector specific advertising processes. Study 2's survey instrument was developed as a consequence of international collaboration, and information identified from Study 1 and the Literature Review.

Four themes from Study 2's qualitative online survey respondents generally paralleled Study 1's underlying narrative, and indicated that public servants perceived a raft of cyber platforms contributed to workplace cyberbullying, with emails contributing the most (RQ1). Indeed all 127 anonymous survey respondents indicated that workplace email was the main offender in facilitating cyberbullying at work. Empirical evidence found employees perceived online bullying messages as being sent between internal government and external non-government employees, agencies and clients (RQ1). This behaviour resulted in a number of work and non-work (private) behavioural outcomes. These included reduced job performance, satisfaction and increased workplace stress (RQ2; behavioural consequences), and whole-of-agency outcomes including decreased confidence in organisational culture in resolving cyberbullying events (RQ2; cultural consequences).

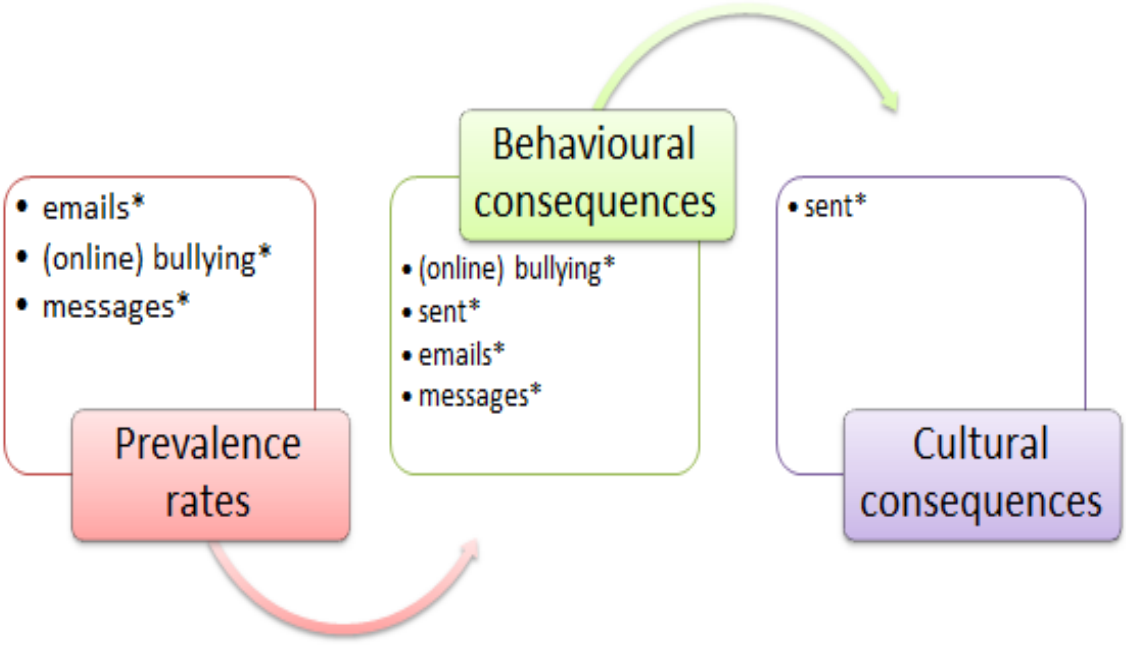


Figure 5.7. Thematic substantiation of the two research questions – Study 2.

As shown in Figure 5.7, the four themes from Study 2 responded to the two research questions regarding prevalence rates and consequences:

- Emails: prevalence rates and behavioural consequences: RQ1 and RQ2 (21 concepts; email was perceived as an ICT enabler of workplace cyber behaviours and thus a prevalence indicators, while this online communication behaviour represented a consequence indicator as it impacted employees' job performance et al.),
- Messages: prevalence rates and behavioural consequences: RQ1 and RQ2 (12 concepts; the type and content of inter and intra task-related messages),
- Bullying (online): prevalence rates and behavioural consequences: RQ1 & RQ2 (12 concepts; online workplace actions and behaviours viewed as bullying), and
- Sent: behavioural and cultural consequences: RQ2 (two concepts; online bullying messages to individuals, groups, and across the agency, or agencies and potentially publically impacting employees, and perceptions of organisational culture by both internal and external observers).

Crucially, the use of SIP theory (Walther, 1992, 1996) assisted in explaining these constructs, particularly in regard to how cyber communications are interpreted by employees through the combined lens of an organisation's culture (both explicit and implicit), and their place in it. In conclusion, Study 2's results indicate that public servants feel they are being cyberbullied at work, and that this workplace behaviour is viewed as having consequences to their career, stress levels and health, and general workplace performance and job satisfaction. Finally, public servants perceive that existing public sector legislation, policies and governance processes are perceived as inefficacious in dealing with the variables leading to cyberbullying events, or the life-work consequences. The results taken from Study 2 thus supported the two research questions driving this research.

5.6.1 Conclusions | Study 1 and Study 2

Crucially, the use of SIP theory was critical in illustrating the nine themes identified from Phase 1's two studies. These nine themes (five from Study 1 and four from Study 2) arose from public servants' perceptions of cyberbullying and their

workplace, their understanding of the public sector's explicit governance frameworks (overt culture) and implicit accepted behaviours (covert culture), and their place in it. Evidence from the qualitative studies implied that public servants are highly adaptive in their use of a range of old and new cyber technologies (Public Service Commission, 2013, 2014). Within the context of SIP (Fulk et al., 1987; Walther, 1992, 1996; Walther et al., 2005), government employees were found to use their perceptions of accepted workplace behaviours to interpret both offline and online communications and whole of enterprise networking (Fulk & Yuan, 2013). Furthermore, the work restrictions that restrain public servants from using online social cues, such as emoticons, appeared to not restrict the development of professional workplace relationships.

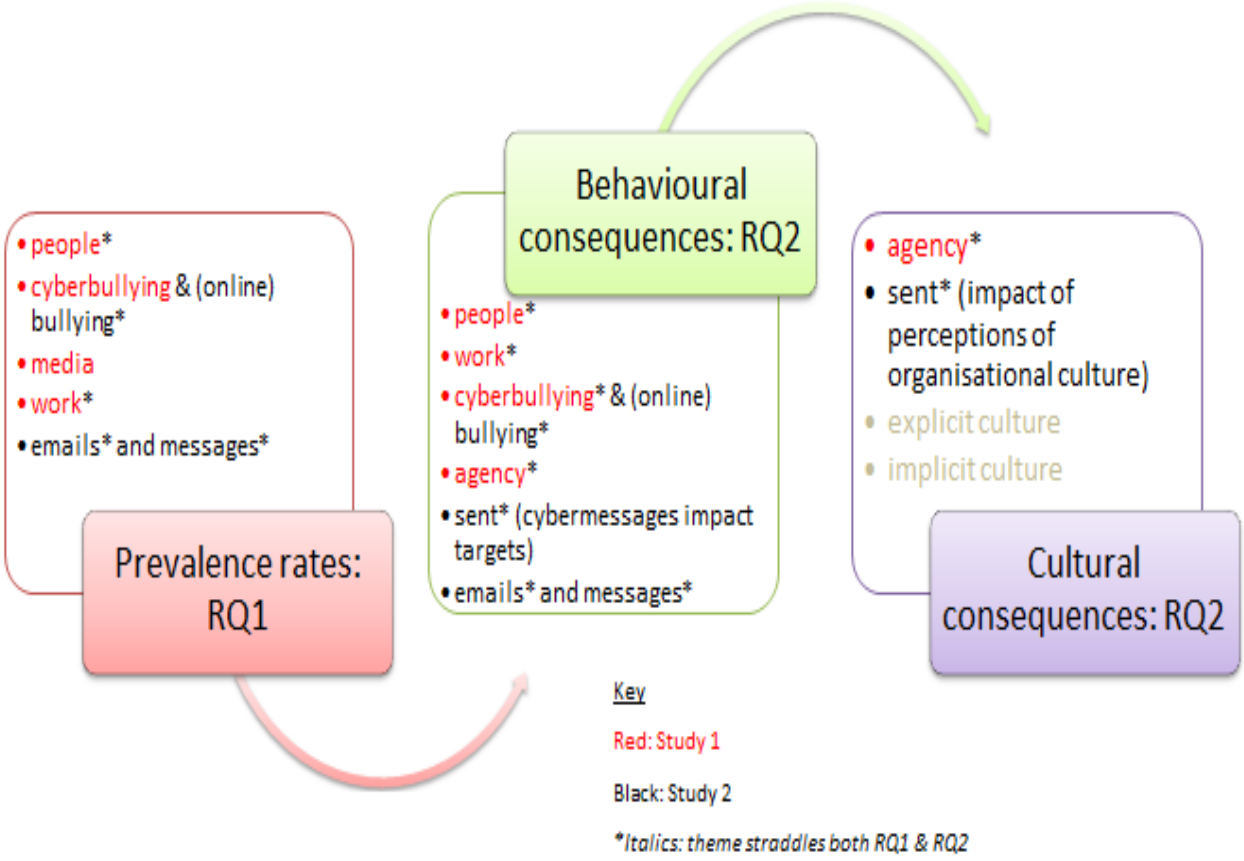


Figure 5.8. Compilation of results from Study 1 and Study 2 in addressing the two RQs.

As shown in Figure 5.8, Phase 1's two studies provided substantiating empirical evidence supporting the two research questions. Themes depicted in red writing represent one of the five themes identified in Study 1 (face-to-face

interview). Themes depicted in black writing represent one of the four themes identified in Study 2 (anonymous online qualitative survey). Italicised red (Study 1) or black (Study 2) themes are those that straddle both the prevalence rates (RQ1) and consequences (RQ2) in accordance with public servants' perceptions. Themes depicted These two questions pertained to (a) public servants perceptions' as to the manifestation of workplace cyberbullying in their organisations (prevalence rates) and (b) the consequences or impact of this cyber behaviour. In regards to prevalence rates, Figure 5.8 displays six of the nine themes within the "prevalence rates" box (i.e., *people, cyberbullying/online bullying, media, messages, emails* and *work*). In this regard, public servants clearly perceive cyberbullying messages are sent, at work, across various types of cyber technologies, including workplace emails and other media (e.g., Facebook and other websites, sms, instant messaging, etc.) (Besley, 2009; Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Li, 2007; Lim & Teo, 2009; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). Cyberbullying is also perceived as manifesting from internally-based subordinates, colleagues/peers, supervisors/managers (Zhang & Leidner, 2014), and external government employees and non-government clientele (Kowalski et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010).

Figure 5.8 displays a cross-section of themes across two distinct forms of consequences; these are entitled "behavioural consequences" (i.e., *sent, work* and *people*) and "cultural consequences" (i.e., *agency* and *sent*). The reasons some themes overlap between the prevalence rates and consequences "boxes" is twofold. Employees perceived these themes as firstly, examples of workplace cyberbullying behaviour (prevalence), and secondly, that these behaviours impacted their workplace stress levels, job satisfaction and performance, and organisation culture (consequences).

Employees perceived behavioural consequences as the behaviours arising from internal or external individuals, and that directly impacted employees' workplace capabilities. For example, heightened workplace stress levels (Borstorff et al., 2007; Lowry & Moskos, 2005), were experienced due to the cumulative pressure arising from online bullying and aggression from external clients and internal supervisors and colleagues. Decreased work performance (Cortina et al., 2001; Lim & Cortina, 2005) arose from a combination of factors, for example, cyber fatigue and loss of confidence arose from feelings of being continuously accessible to work while

simultaneously countering hostile online workplace communications. Decreased job satisfaction (Baruch, 2005) arose from of employees' erosion of trust in their team-mates or supervisors due to their undermining online behaviour on social media websites. The second consequence, entitled " cultural consequences" regarded employees' perceptions in how the explicit and implicit manifestations of public sector culture influenced the work environment. These cultural consequences also affected employees' perceptions of job stress, job satisfaction and job performance.

Organisational cultural consequences evidenced an overall effect on individuals and organisations. Public servants consistently talked about how the old and inefficient cultural context and governance framework (i.e., legislation and policies enacted through agencies' governance procedures) (Fai*r Work Act 2009; WHS Act 2011*) was extensive yet also working against with the new cyber environment (Robbins et al., 2004; Sendjaya et al., 2008). Indeed, public servants perceived that the new environment entailed being accessible to their employer both during and out of normal work hours (Porter & Kakabadse, 2006) and thus blurred work and home boundaries, and caused increased feelings of stress (Jarvenpaa et al., 2004).

Furthermore, there was a perception that this new cyber environment lacked the necessary robust employment-related legislative or policy protection and intervention measures to intervene or resolve workplace cyberbullying. This point has also been identified in regards to face-to-face bullying research (Boucaut, 2001, 2003) This was viewed as particularly challenging in cases on anonymous perpetrators, where the outcome was an erosion of personal and professional reputation that could erode career longevity. In these cases, employees found they could be extensively and publically cyberbullied for their official role as a decision maker (i.e., the decision could be quite minor but upset a number of internal employees) without any legal recourse available to them through the public service.

In this regard, employees thought this new cyber work environment required robust employment-focused educational programs into the pros and cons of these CMCs. This training would include instruction for employers as to their legal obligations and duty of care responsibilities when investing in these new workplace technologies (e.g., how to maintain their organisation's reputation and develop anti-cyberbullying behaviours). It would also include employees' rights in using

workplace cyber technologies (e.g., how to avoid, resolve and mitigate online bullying and harassment), and employees' rights as Australian citizens (e.g., democratic right to voice their opinions).

In addendum, public servants perceived workplace cyberbullying communications and behaviours as manifesting systemically across government organisations in three ways. Firstly, these communications transpire through workforce culture, policies and procedures, where the organisation itself is perceived as a "bully" (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013). Secondly, as they ensue internally or between government employees within a government agency or across many government agencies. And thirdly, these online communication behaviours manifest externally or arising from non-government clients and customers (Kowalski et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010).

As a consequence, public sector employees report workplace cyberbullying communications and behaviours as impacting their stress levels (in some cases leading to reduced well-being), and decreasing job satisfaction and performance. These studies also found that employees' viewed the public sector's explicit culture as generally ineffective in dealing with the full spectrum of cyberbullying events. This is particularly the case for employees dealing with cyberbullying behaviours arising from external clients at frontline areas, where members of the public name and shame staff via anonymous websites, that name and shame officials. Public servants also perceive that the implicit cultural behaviours (e.g., a group or organisations' unspoken rules about "this is the way we do things around here"), allows both offline and online bullying. Furthermore, this behaviour is perceived as being modelled by staff and management as a consequence of ignoring or evading hard decisions about how to deal with aggressive workplace behaviours. Empirical evidence demonstrates that public servants perceive these consequences as potentially detrimental to their career prospects.

In conclusion, Phase 1's qualitative studies, comprising Study 1 and Study 2, provide substantial empirical evidence in support to the two research questions driving this research.

Chapter 6: Study Three: Quantitative Survey

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In an effort to enhance the narrative of this thesis, this chapter will discuss the data collection, analysis, and results obtained from Study 3's online survey. A comprehensive discussion of Study 3's results is provided in Chapter 7. Study 3's data was collected from 463 nationally based public servants working in Local, State, Territory and Commonwealth public service organisations, agencies and departments. In this research, the "Australian public sector" refers to nationally based Local, State, Territory and Commonwealth public services. Survey respondents were recruited using the snowball method, or non-probability sampling strategy, (Creswell, 2012; Punch, 2005), through public sector-specific group email, online and offline media articles, union and non-union websites. Ethical and confidentiality processes were followed to ensure all participants retained their anonymity, and were informed of participant withdrawal procedures, and anti-bullying counselling support contacts. Sequential exploratory mixed methods approach was used in this research, whereby the statistical data augmented the rich qualitative data (Bergman, 2008, 2010, 2011; Plano Clark, 2010).

Two research questions which influenced this thesis were developed in response to the focussing theme, namely: What is the prevalence, and what are the consequences, of negative workplace cyber communication (cyberbullying) in the Australian public sector? Both research questions shaped the research methodology, design and the three studies:

- RQ1. How do Australian public sector employees perceive cyberbullying as manifesting within Australian public sector work environments? (prevalence).
- RQ2. How do Australian public sector employees perceive workplace cyberbullying as affecting their workplace stress, job satisfaction, work performance, and organisational culture? (consequences).

Study 3 was guided by five hypotheses, all of which stemmed from the two research questions. Hypothesis 1 investigated RQ1 (prevalence rates of workplace cyberbullying), while hypotheses 2, 3, 4 and 5 examined RQ2 (consequences of workplace cyberbullying). Given the exploratory nature of this research, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to examine and validate measures for workplace cyberbullying (19-item Cyber Negative Acts Questionnaire - CNAQ) (Coyne, et al., In press), and organisational culture (revised 30-item Organizational Culture Questionnaire – OCQ) (Muchinsky, 1976), plus the three single items measuring workplace stress, job satisfaction, and job performance. EFA was used in this study given the researcher's general lack of expectations regarding the number or structure of the factors extracted, other than what was defined by the instruments used in this study. IBM's SPSS (Field, 2013) analysis software operationalised and statistically analysed the variables.

Chapter 6 encompasses the following subsections: (a) participants, (b) procedure – collection methods, survey design and dissemination, (c) analysis – approach and methodology, (d) results, and (e) conclusion. A discussion of the empirical results is provided in Chapter 7.

6.2 Participants

Four hundred and sixty-three geographically dispersed public servants from Local, State, Territory and Commonwealth public services responded to Study 3's online survey. The socio-demographic and contextual characteristics of the participants were tabulated in the form of frequency distributions (counts and percentages) classified into mutually exclusive groups according to their gender, age, marital status, highest educational level, size of agency, level in Australian public service, employment status, and role (refer section 6.5.2).

Participants were sourced through a self-selected convenience sampling process from a range of policy and delivery-focused Australian government agencies. The survey was anonymously administered through Queensland University of Technology's (QUT) online survey tool KeySurvey (Duplock, Savage, Gee, & Kelson, 2010). Detail on the dissemination process can be found under section 6.3.7 titled Survey dissemination. According to Creswell (2012) a statistically large and diverse sampling frame helps support external validity and thus allows future

replication and generalisability of the results. Given this is a self-selected convenience sampling frame, it is likely the results are potentially biased in terms of employees' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). This potential bias was partially mitigated by the large sample size. Construct validity was enhanced through the use of EFA to attempt to address any issues associated with common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Furthermore, internal validity was supported through the triangulation of the statistical results by the qualitative results obtained in Study 1 and Study 2.

6.3 Procedure

This section describes how the quantitative data was collected. This has been detailed in six subsections (a) justification: online survey, (b) survey dissemination, (c) collection method, (d) hypotheses: rationale, (e) survey design, and (g) survey validation. The 463 survey respondents were drawn from the full spectrum of public sector roles and positions and included staff, middle-management and members of the executive. The survey was used to collect Australian public service employees' perceptions of the prevalence rates and consequences of negative workplace cyber behaviours, or workplace cyberbullying, across government organisations. The development of the survey was informed by the Literature Review and from Phase 1's face-to-face interviews. The survey was used to illuminate employees' perceptions regarding the key factors around workplace cyberbullying. It was comprised of a three-part questionnaire that was disseminated nationally using public sector-specific online and offline outlets, including public media and union websites.

6.3.1 Justification | Online survey

According to Hoel and Giga (2006), online surveys can collect substantial and quality material from geographically dispersed, literate and technologically conversant participants. Online surveys quickly and cheaply gather large numbers of responses, particularly if the instrument is posted on a popular website, online newsletter, or embedded into a group email (Sue & Ritter, 2007). Given the researcher's over twenty-years' experience as a public servant, it was understood most public servants had access to workplace or home computers or internet enabled iPhones, thus it was deemed likely employees would respond quickly to an emailed

or online newsletter invitation. Sue and Ritter (2007) found that most computer-literate workers are more likely to respond to online surveys within the first day of receiving the request, or within a few days. Given the sensitivity of the survey, anonymity of the respondents was heavily emphasised in an effort to reassure participants that their identities would be protected (Sue & Ritter, 2007).

This collection method was deemed a valid option given the convenience sample largely consisted of geographically dispersed, computer and web-based users (Australian Public Service Commission, 2013, 2014). Drawbacks associated with online surveys, other than the access and knowledge issues already mentioned, also include technological problems associated with inadequate bandwidth and unreliable delivery mechanisms. Analysis of completion rates would suggest neither of these issues were a problem

6.3.2 Survey dissemination

The survey was anonymously administered using QUT's online survey software KeySurvey (Duplock et al., 2010). Participants' consent was obtained via the first segment of the survey (Appendix G). Survey distribution was conducted using public service specific group email, invitations through the unaffiliated Australian public sector online newsletter entitled PSNews, and public media outlets, public sector union website (Appendix H), and public sector-specific Twitter and Facebook sites. Public sector specific survey invitations were nationally promulgated across State and Territory online and offline newspapers and magazines (e.g., Canberra's CityNews magazine). Newspapers included The Canberra Times, Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, national online news outlets such as World News at WN.com, All Australian News (allnewsau.com) Twitter and Facebook, and thirty regional papers, including The Chronicle, the Gatton Star, South Burnett Times, Stanthorpe Border Post, The Satellite and Daily News. Structured questions covered gender, age, duration of employment, ethnic background, agency size (small, medium, large), agency location (regional/central office) and so forth.

While web surveys are gaining popularity due to the advantages of speed, cost, and flexibility, this data collection method can also result in significant sampling limitations (Hoel & Giga, 2006). In this case, the sampling frame was restricted to public servants working in Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local government agencies with relatively easy access to internet-enabled workplace computers and/or

have the ability to access internet-enabled home computers. This was not seen as an issue as the research questions were directed at this group of people.

6.3.3 Collection method

Study 3 investigated five hypotheses, all of which stemmed from the two research questions guiding this research:

> H1. Public servants perceive cyberbullying as manifesting in their workplaces (prevalence, RQ1).
>
> H2. Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as correlated with increased levels of workplace stress (consequences, RQ2).
>
> H3. Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as correlated with decreased overall work performance (consequences, RQ2).
>
> H4. Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as correlated with decreased feelings of job satisfaction (consequences, RQ2).
>
> H5.Workplace cyberbullying levels are correlated with employees' decreased perceptions of organisational cultural efficacy (consequences, RQ2).

The survey (Appendix G) was composed of three sections. These sections consisted of three parts. Part1 regarded work-related bullying behaviours conducted via technology (cyber platforms), Part 2 pertained to job satisfaction, job performance, stress levels, and Part 3 involved organisational culture. Participants' consent was obtained in the introductory segment of the survey.

6.3.4 Hypotheses | Rationale

This study relies upon data obtained from public servants experiencing or observing workplace cyberbullying. This data was analysed to investigate the prevalence and consequences of negative workplace cyber communication. To frame this analysis several hypotheses are presented.

Hypothesis 1: Public servants perceived cyberbullying as manifesting in their workplaces.

As indicated in the Literature Review, this hypothesis relates to public servants' perceptions of the prevalence of workplace cyberbullying (RQ1). This hypothesis emerged from the Literature Review, which indicated that (a) little to no

information is currently available as to the prevalence of workplace cyberbullying within Australian public sector organisations, and (b) there is a need to better understand the nature and scope of workplace cyberbullying to help clarify the social and economic costs of this phenomenon (Giumetti et al., 2012).

As explored in the Literature Review, many research limitations are associated with workplace bullying and cyberbullying research, including the lack of a definitive workplace cyberbullying instrument (Coyne et al., In press). While many cyberbullying instrument are available to measure juvenile and youth behaviour (e.g., the Cyberbullying and Online Aggression Survey developed by Hinduja and Patchin, 2006), adult-based workplace cyberbullying research (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Campbell & Privitera, 2009; Coyne et al., In press; Piotrowski, 2012b) tend to use modified versions of traditional face-to-face workplace bullying instruments such as the NAQ-Revised (Einarsen et al., 2009).

Research in this field typically employs one of two methods to determine the prevalence of cyberbullying (a) identify targets or victims by measuring the occurrence of negative workplace acts over time using a behavioural checklist, and (b) reliance on participants' ability to self-identify as a target or victim (Cowie et al., 2002). These methods often result in differing degrees of reported prevalence of cyberbullying (Rayner, 1999; Salin, 2001), as targets may not perceive the behaviour as bullying, while others may simply avoid self-labelling as a target/victim (Rayner et al., 2002). Furthermore, such studies have relied on employees' recollections of past events and their negative or positive perceptions of the organisational work environment (Lewis et al., 2008). In the context of this study, a degree of subjectivity on behalf of the participants is considered inescapable as workplace bullying research relies on volunteer participants who self-identify as targets or victims (Einarsen et al., 2003; Einarsen & Mikkelsen, 2003). Further a degree of under-reporting has been noted in the literature (Einarsen et al., 2003) as a consequence of employees who report observing or experiencing bullying behaviours, but tend not to officially report the behaviour due to a lack of faith in the employing bodies (APSC, 2013). Hoel and Cooper (2000) suggest that self-identifying as workplace cyberbullying target may be less important than the perception of persistent negative workplace behaviours.

Hypothesis 2: Workplace cyberbullying levels is perceived by employees as correlated with increased levels of workplace stress.

Hypothesis 3: Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as correlated with decreased overall work performance.

Hypothesis 4: Workplace cyberbullying levels are perceived by employees as correlated with decreased feelings of job satisfaction.

Hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 relate to RQ2, and pertain to public servants' perceptions as to the consequences of workplace cyberbullying. Specifically, these three hypotheses investigate the impact of workplace cyberbullying on employee workplace stress levels, job satisfaction and job performance. This is particularly relevant given stress related research into traditional face-to-face incivility and workplace bullying has been adversely linked to employee job burnout (Kern & Grandey, 2009), employees' motivation, health and performance (Cortina, Magley, Williams, & Langhout, 2001; Lim & Cortina, 2005), and it could be reasonably suggested similar results may arise g from workplace cyberbullying. Employee job or work performance is generally assessed by supervisors, and is normally conducted across a number of judgemental measures – known as rankings and ratings – to enable organisations to determine the effectiveness of specific work related behaviours (Akinbowale, Lourens, & Jinabhai, 2014). In Study 3, the survey asked employees to conduct a self-ranked performance appraisal taking into account their general work stress and job satisfaction (Cunny & Perri, 1991) within the context of workplace cyberbullying.

In summary, hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 relate to the effect of negative workplace cyber communication on three outcomes: employee job satisfaction, stress and work performance (job ranking).

Hypothesis 5: Workplace cyberbullying levels are correlated with employees' decreased perceptions of organisational cultural efficacy.

Hypothesis 5 relates to RQ2 and investigates employees' decreased perceptions as to the effectiveness, or efficacy, of their organisation's culture in responding and dealing with workplace cyberbullying events. Organisational culture has been described as a characteristic of organisations that is reflected in how employees

describe workplace policies, practices and work conditions (D'Cruz, 2012; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2009; Keashly & Harvey, 2006; Salin & Hoel, 2011). An organisation's culture can be recognised implicitly, through the values, beliefs, and explicitly, through rules governing conduct and workplace processes (e.g., governance processes) that guide employees' professional interactions (Boucaut, 2003). In this research, organisational culture is important due to its inherent relationship to individual, group and organisational variables including employee work stress, job satisfaction (Nagy, 2002) and work performance (Kivimäki et al., 2000). Workplace stress has been found to be a significant mechanism in explaining individual and group performance outcomes, including organisational commitment (Cheung et al., 2009) and employee behaviour (Ilies et al., 2009).

Organisational research has found that ineffective or unjust organisational staff policies can adversely affect work-related outcomes (Wright, Gardner, & Moynihan, 2003), such as job satisfaction and employee work performance. In this regard, this hypothesis considers the mediating effects of employees' perceptions of efficacious organisational policies and processes (Darratt, Amyx, & Bennett, 2010) and workplace cyberbullying.

6.3.5 Survey design

The subsections below describe the three parts comprising Study 3's online questionnaire. These subsections are entitled (a) amended workplace cyberbullying instrument – part one, (b) workplace stress, job satisfaction and performance – part two, and (c) organisational culture instrument – part three. UHREC ethics clearance was obtained prior to the survey's release.

Workplace cyberbullying – part one

Study 3's online questionnaire (Appendix G) investigated public servants' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying across various technological platforms, such as email, social media, sms and phone calls. This workplace cyberbullying instrument comprised an amended NAQ-R (Einarsen et al., 2009), entitled the Cyber-Negative Acts Questionnaire (CNAQ: Coyne et al., In press), together with a definition of workplace cyberbullying. The CNAQ's (Coyne et al., In press) 19-items reflected a cyber-context of the items mirrored in the original NAQ-Revised face-to-face bullying measure developed by Einarsen et al. (2009). Permission to use the

CNAQ was sourced from the University of Nottingham, UK (Appendix F). While developing the questionnaire, other workplace bullying and organisational aggression instruments were considered:

(a) NAQ-R (Einarsen et al., 2009) - a behavioural inventory of negative behaviours across task-related, person-related and physical-related intimidation,

(b) Workplace Aggression Research Questionnaire (Harvey & Keashly, 2003) - a behavioural inventory of workplace aggression behaviours, and

(c) the LIPT (Leymann, 1990) - a behavioural inventory of workplace psychological hostile behaviours.

These workplace bullying instruments included items focused only on traditional face-to-face bullying or aggression, together with a variety of operational criteria and workplace bullying definitions (Nielsen et al., 2010). Consequently, the researcher decided to use the CNAQ (Coyne et al, In press). In this manner, this research would align with current workplace cyberbullying definitions, technological language, and assist in future domestic and internationally-based comparative studies.

The decision to use the amended CNAQ arose from a number of considerations. Firstly, workplace face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying are conceptually similar, as reflected within the shared elements of intent, repetition, power imbalance and harm (Smith et al., 2008), thereby enabling the use of a cyber-amended NAQ measure. Secondly, the NAQ-R provided a foundation instrument against which to compare workplace bullying online and offline findings. Thirdly, the use of an amended NAQ parallels similar methods used by Coyne et al. (In press), and Privitera and Campbell (2009), while Giumetti et al., (2012) who amended the Workplace Incivility Scale by adding the word 'online' to each item.

The adoption of this measure was also influence by the researcher's collaborative relationship with the University of Sheffield, UK (Coyne et al., 2014). This university is working with international universities to develop a comprehensive, valid and reliable workplace cyberbullying measure. The use of the UK's cyberbullying measure provided the capacity to compare survey findings across international boundaries. This point is particularly important given the potentially global nature of workplace cyberbullying, and the current small number

of workplace cyberbullying researchers. Approval to use the CNAQ was gained by both the UK, and QUT's UHREC. This instrument measures participants' responses to three criteria attributed to traditional face-to-face workplace bullying measure entitled the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (Einarsen et al., 2009). The NAQ-R has good internal consistency with a reported Cronbach's alpha of .90, which Zaiontz (2014b) states indicates a good reliability, and considered a valid and reliable tool to measure workplace bullying:

- Work-related – 7-items pertaining to: Someone withholding information which affects your performance, Being ordered to do work below your level of competence, Having your opinions ignored, Being given tasks with unreasonable deadlines, Excessive monitoring of your work, Pressure not to claim something to which by right you are entitled, and Being exposed to an unmanageable workload. These criteria were used in the CNAQ measure as the items are conceptually similar to workplace cyberbullying; for instance employees can be excluded from work emails pertaining to group or team events (Coyne et al., In press).
- Person-related – 12-items relating to: Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work, Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks, Spreading of gossip and rumours about you, Being ignored or excluded, Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person, attitudes or your private life, Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job, Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes, Being ignored or facing a hostile reaction when you approach, Persistent criticism of your errors or mistakes, Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get along with, Having allegations made against you, and Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm. These criterion were used in the CNAQ as they are conceptually similar to workplace cyberbullying (Coyne et al., In press) for instance offensive or insulting rumours can be precipitated across both workplace and personal social media platforms, where private Facebook posts are pasted into work emails and mass disseminated.
- Physical intimidation – 3-items relating to: Being shouted at or being the target of spontaneous anger, Intimidating behaviours such as finger-

pointing, invasion of personal space, shoving, blocking your way, Threats of violence or physical abuse or actual abuse, being the target of spontaneous anger such as shouting, invasion of personal space or shoving or blocking or threats of or actual physical violence and abuse. These items were not used in the 19-item CNAQ measure.

The CNAQ considered these three criteria in terms of online abuse and intimidation. To ascertain a level of content validity of the Cyber-NAQ, NAQ-R items were rated as to the extent to which each act (or question) could be enacted over various electronic media: *1. text messaging, 2. pictures/photos or video clips, 3. phone calls, 4. email, 5. chat rooms, 6. instant messaging 7. websites, 8. social networking websites* (Coyne et al., In press). The first seven electronic media were included as they were identified by Smith et al., (2008) as the most common media for perpetrators to engage in cyberbullying behaviours, while social networking websites were included due to their increased use in recent years. Screening was conducted on the basis of agreement that behaviours could be enacted over electronic media, resulted in three items being removed (withholding of information; intimidating behaviour, and excessive teasing) (Coyne et al., In press). Using the same rating scale as the NAQ-R, participants were asked to rate their exposure to each of the 19 acts over electronic media. The combination of the cyber content validity conducted by Coyne et al. (In press), which was based on the internally consistent, valid and reliable NAQ-R (Einarsen, et al., 2009), the CNAQ was found to be valid and reliable measure of workplace cyberbullying.

Participants were asked to self-rate their exposure (never, now or then, monthly, weekly, daily) against 19 acts of negative workplace cyber communications (communications using technology) across the previous six months. According to Coyne et al. (In press), three items (withholding of information; intimidating behaviour; and excessive teasing) had been removed from the original 22-item NAQ-Revised due to poor corrected-item total correlations. The response categories were: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *unsure*, 4 = *agree*, 5 = *strongly agree* (section 6.3.3). To enhance opportunities for comparison studies across data sets, the definition of workplace cyberbullying mirrored that used by Coyne et al. (In press) and inserted at the beginning of the workplace cyberbullying instrument. This definition was included to help focus participants on the issue (i.e., cyberbullying

rather than face-to-face bullying) and reduce inconsistent responses (Tokunaga, 2010).

Workplace stress, job performance and satisfaction – part two

The second part of the questionnaire comprised three single-item measures that correlated with the three research concepts known as (a) workplace stress, (b) job satisfaction, and (c) job performance (Cunny & Perri, 1991; Loo, 2002; Nagy, 2002). These questions were short and concise in an effort to engage time-poor participants (Nagy, 2002). Past research suggests single-item measures strongly correlate with multiple-item measures of the same concept (Cunny & Perri, 1991; Loo, 2002; Nagy, 2002), and may be applied, in this case, to single-item measures of work-related stress – which links to health (Hasson & Arnetz, 2005), job satisfaction (Nagy, 2002) and overall job ranking/rating (work performance) (Akinbowale et al., 2014). Furthermore, single-item measures are succinct and more efficient and may be attractive to time poor public service employees to complete (Nagy, 2002).

Employee perceptions of job satisfaction, performance, stress and health: Three single-item scales were used to measure employees' perceptions of their job satisfaction, overall job rating (work performance), and work stress (employee health) across the past six months (Nagy, 2002). Job satisfaction was measured using the single item, "Overall, how satisfied are you in your job?" Answer choices were arranged along a Likert-type scale ranging from 1, *very dissatisfied* to 5, *very satisfied.* Overall work performance or job rating/ranking was measured using the single item, "Overall, how would you rate your experiences at work?" Answer choices ranged from 1, *very negative* to 5, *very positive*. Job stress was measured using a single item, "How stressful do you find your work environment?" (Hasson & Arnetz, 2005). Answers choices ranged from 1, *very unstressful* to 5, *very stressful*.

Organisational culture – part three

The third part of the questionnaire comprised a modified version of Litwin and Stringer's (1968) 50-item Organizational Culture Questionnaire (OCQ) (Litwin & Stringer, 1968), and comprised 30-items (Muchinsky, 1976). This instrument asked survey participants their perceptions of organisational culture, within the context of workplace cyberbullying. The modified version comprised 30-items across 6 dimensions (Muchinsky, 1976; Schnake, 1983) developed by Sims and LaFollette (Muchinsky, 1976). Within the context of workplace cyberbullying, the OCQ

collected public servants' perceptions regarding the efficacy of public sector policies, rules and regulations (explicit culture), and how the explicit culture was consistent within the context of organisational norms and expectations (implicit culture). The concept was explored that employees who rated organisational processes as poor in dealing with workplace cyberbullying events may also experience low job satisfaction and performance and heightened stress levels. This questionnaire is attached (Appendix G).

Litwin and Stringer (1968) defined organisational culture and climate as the work environment's measurable properties that are consciously or unconsciously viewed by employees and which influence and motivate workplace conduct and performance, and lead to job satisfaction. These measurable properties constitute an aggregate of shared perceptions on the efficacy of organisational policies, practices, and procedures in facilitating interpersonal and hierarchical relationships among organisational members. The revised six scales for organisational climate were used in Study 3's online survey (Muchinsky, 1976) included structure and procedures, responsibility, organizational identification, reward/affective tone toward management, warmth and conflict:

- Structure and Procedures: 8-items – "the feeling that employees have about the constraints in the group, how many rules, regulations, procedures there are; is there an emphasis on "red tape" and going through channels, or is there a loose and informal atmosphere" (Muchinsky, 1976, p. 373). (e.g., Jobs clearly defined and logically structured, Unclear formal authority, Clearly explained structure and policies, Red-tape kept to a minimum, Difficult for new ideas to receive consideration, Productivity suffers from lack of planning, Unsure of boss during some projects, Concerned for getting the right people for the job).
- Responsibility: 7-items - "the feeling of being your own boss: not having to double-check all your decisions; when you have a job to do, knowing that it is your job"(Muchinsky, 1976, p. 373) (e.g., Don't rely on individual judgement, If you have the right approach, just go ahead, Set guidelines and let subordinates take responsibility, To get ahead, you must stick your neck out, People should solve problems by themselves, Lots of excuses when there is a mistake, A problem with individuals taking responsibility).

- Organizational Identification: 4-items – "the feeling that you belong to a company and you are a valued member of a working team: the importance placed on this kind of spirit" (Muchinsky, 1976, p. 374). (e.g., People are proud to belong here, Member of a well-functioning team, Not much personal loyalty towards organization, People primarily look out for themselves).
- Reward or Affective tone toward management: 6-items – "the feeling of being rewarded for a job well done; emphasizing positive rewards rather than punishments, the perceived fairness of the pay and promotion policies" (Muchinsky, 1976, p. 373). (e.g., The best rise to the top in our promotion system, Rewards outweigh the threats and criticism, Reward is proportional to excellence in performance, Not enough reward and recognition, Lots of criticism, Make a mistake and you will be punished).
- Warmth: 5-items – "the feeling of general good fellowship that prevails in the work group atmosphere; the emphasis on being well liked; the prevalence of friendly and informal social groups" (Muchinsky, 1976, p. 373). (e.g., A friendly atmosphere prevails among our people, Relaxed, easy-going working climate, Hard to get to know people here, People tend to be cool and aloof, Warm relationship between management and workers).
- Conflict: 4-items – "the feeling that managers and other workers want to hear different opinions: the emphasis placed on getting problems out in the open, rather than smoothing them over or ignoring them" (Muchinsky, 1976, p. 374). (e.g., To make a good impression, avoid arguments, Conflict between competing departments is healthy, Encouraged to speak our minds even if disagreeing, The goal is to decide smoothly and quickly).

Previous research using these six dimensional scales included a random sample of 1160 employees from a large public utility organisation with survey respondents collected from "a broad spectrum of occupations including various levels of management" (Muchinsky, 1976, p. 373). Survey results generally found this instrument with Cronbach's alpha of acceptable (0.6 to 0.7) to good (0.8 or higher) reliability (Muchinsky, 1976; Zaiontz, 2014b). Muchinsky (1976) found high reliabilities of .91, .82 and .82 respectively against reward/affective toward management, organizational identification, structure and procedures, a satisfactory reliability of .75 for warmth, while lower reliabilities were correlated for

responsibility and conflict. The valid organisational culture factor extracted from this thesis derived from the four dimensions of reward/affective tone towards management, organizational identification, structure and procedures, and warmth (refer to section 6.5.4).

6.3.6 Survey validation

Prior to disseminating the online survey nationally, a pre-survey was sent to three QUT academics for their expert review as well as a small panel of 10 public servants to assess the instrument's content validity. This represented an important step and confirmed the questions for content, clarity and construct validity (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). As a result of the pilot, the workplace cyberbullying definition was amended to better align to public service terminology. As a result items referring to workplace "cyberbullying" were replaced with "negative workplace cyber behaviour". This term was deemed by the panel of 10 public servants as more accurately reflecting current workplace perceptions around hostile, bullying or aggressive workplace online communications:

> *The following behaviours are often seen as examples of negative workplace cyber behaviour. Over the last six (6) months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts, at work, through different forms of work-based technology? When responding, consider every question in relation to these eight types of work-based technology:*
>
> - *text messaging,*
> - *pictures/photos or video clips,*
> - *phone calls,*
> - *email,*
> - *chat rooms (e.g., project management),*
> - *instant messaging,*
> - *websites, and*
> - *social networking websites (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, Bebo).*
>
> (Appendix G, p.394)

The inclusion of media platforms listed within the workplace cyberbullying definition derived from the Literature Review (Coyne et al., In press; Smith et al., 2008) and empirical evidence from Studies 1 and 2. For example, Study 2 found email, telephone calls, text messages, social media websites, video conferencing software and instant messaging services were common workplace cyber platforms used in cyberbullying (section 5.5.3, Table 5.3). According to Coyne et al. (In press), CNAQ's level of content validity was rated by three subject-matter experts regarding the extent to which "each act could be enacted over various electronic media" (p. 13). The first seven media platforms listed were also identified as generally used by cyberbullying perpetrators (Smith et al., 2008). The inclusion of social networking websites was identified in the Literature Review, which found increasing usage across all school, home and workplaces (Borstorff et al., 2007; Eivazi, 2001; Keith & Martin, 2005; Ybarra, Diener-West, & Leaf, 2007).

6.4 Analysis

The subsections below detail the methods used for analysis of data obtained from the survey. EFA was used to analyse the data collected from the 463 survey respondents. These subsections are entitled (a) screening and cleaning of data, (b), Exploratory Factor Analysis, (c) operationalisation of variables, and (d) testing of hypotheses. The results from this analysis is detailed within section 6.5, titled Results.

6.4.1 Analysis approach and method

In applying EFA the researcher followed the five-step EFA protocol (Field, 2013). These steps included (1) confirming the data's suitability for factor analysis, (2) identifying the best factor extraction process, (3) identifying the criteria by which to determine factor extraction, (4) selection of rotational method, and (5) interpretation and labelling of factors (Field, 2013). These steps are discussed in the subsections below, while the outcome of this process is provided in Results section.

Screening and cleaning of data

The data derived from each instrument, that is, the demographic and contextual characteristics of the participants, were imported from KeySurvey (Duplock et al., 2010) into the data editor of IBM SPSS version 20.0 and screened for erroneous and missing values. This data included the demographic and contextual

characteristics of the participants, the three single scores used to measure workplace stress, job satisfaction and overall work performance, the 19-item scores collected using the CNAQ (Coyne et al., In press), and the 30-item modified OCQ (Muchinsky, 1976). The general rule of thumb is that up to 10% of missing data on any variable is acceptable and should be retained (Cohen, 2003), while up to 15% of missing data is acceptable if the data missing is "random" (Hertel, 1976). The level of missing data in this study was below this benchmark and is further discussed in section 6.5.1.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was to condense the 49 multidimensional item scores collected using the 19-item CNAQ and the 30-item OCQ into a smaller number of unidimensional constructs (Field, 2013). A unidimensional construct represents a unifying concept or theme that cannot be operationalised directly with a single measurement, yet can be inferred by combining multiple measurements into a single factor score (Hair, Anderson, Babin, Tatman, & Black, 2010). The two types of Factor Analysis commonly used are (a) Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), which is used to confirm the existence of pre-defined constructs, and (b) Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), which is used when there are no pre-conceptions of what the constructs might be (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999). EFA was used in this study as the researcher had only very general expectations regarding the number or structure of the factors extracted, and indeed, while the construct was defined by the instruments previously developed, the researcher had no guidance as to what a shortened form would look like.

Quantitative variables with defined units, measured using continuous interval level scales, yield the most valid factor solutions (Hair et al., 2010). However, each item in the CNAQ was scored using a 5-point Likert style scale (*1, Never, 2, Now and then; 3, Monthly, 4, Weekly, 5, Daily*); as was each item in the OCQ (*1, Definitely Disagree, 2, Disagree, 3, Neutral, 4, Agree, 5, Definitely Agree*). While it is recognised the Likert scale used is technically an ordinal scale, in this context it is treated as being an interval level of measurement, which is line with common practice in educational research (Lehman, 1991). Reverse scoring was applied for oppositely worded items, so that every item was measured in the same logical direction (from low to high). Further numerically coded item scales are commonly

used for EFA particularly by social scientists and psychologists (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, 2012).

Item distributions were subjected to descriptive analysis as part of the data cleaning process (Field, 2013). Any items displaying lack of variance, skewness or kurtosis were identified. This information was used to drive decisions with respect to model and factor extraction. Where the data deviated from a multi-normal distribution, bootstrapping techniques were used to estimate parameters thus ensuring correct estimation of confidence limits (Zaiontz, 2014d).

According to Hair et al., (2010) "the researcher would not generally factor analyze a sample with fewer than 50 observations" and "the minimum is to have at least five times as many cases as the number of variables to be analyzed" (p. 102). In this study, 49 item scores were factor analysed, implying that the minimum sample size should be 49 x 5 = 245. The actual sample size used this study was n = 463, and therefore in excess of the minimum requirement.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy had a value of .928 and .936 respectively, indicating approximately 93% of variance in the measured variables is common variance (Zaiontz, 2014c). This exceeds the recommended cut off of less than 0.5 for EFA analysis (Field, 2013; Zaiontz, 2014c). In each case Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant $p<.001$ (Zaiontz, 2014a). This indicates there are sufficient non-zero inter-correlations to proceed with an EFA (Zaiontz, 2014c).

The rule-of-thumb was applied whereby each factor must consist of a linear combination of at least three inter-related items i.e. be at least just identified. Each factor was also examined for (a) factorial validity, (b) convergent validity, and (c) internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2010). Factorial validity was indicated by the factor loadings (i.e., correlations of the component items and their corresponding factors, ranging from -1 to +1). Items with strong loadings ($\geq .5$) contributed most to factorial validity, but items with weak loadings (< .5) contribute little, justifying their exclusion from the factor (Hair et al., 2010). Convergent validity indicated that a high proportion of the variance was explained by the component items in the factor. The number of factors extracted was determined by analysis of the scree plot and eigenvalues (i.e., the proportion of variance explained). According to Hair et al. (2010), the conventional rule of thumb was that all factors must have an eigenvalue >

1.0, while internal consistency reliability must be indicated by Cronbach's alpha ≥ .7 (Zaiontz, 2014b) implying that the component items collectively and uniformly represented a unifying concept.

Justification

In this study exploratory factor analysis was used to assess the validity of the measures taken from the survey instruments. The justification for this approach derives from this study's exploration of a relatively unknown phenomenon comprised of many variables, and given the type of instrument from which the items were drawn, had very general expectations in regards to the number or nature of the variables. In this instance, the researcher was examining public sector employees' perceptions on the prevalence and consequences of workplace cyberbullying, a topic about which little is known. This phenomenon included a number of different elements or variables that included employees' perceptions of workplace stress, job satisfaction and job performance, and efficacy of organisational culture.

This approach allowed the researcher to determine which variables shared common variance and hence identify possible underlying constructs (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012). The constructs could then form the foundation for model or theory building with respect to the impact of cyberbullying. The process was driven by the following steps: (a) explore the contribution of each variable with a view of reducing the number needed to map the underlying construct, (b) examine the relationship between variables, (c) detect and assess the unidimensionality of theoretical construct, (d) evaluate the construct's validity in terms of the survey instruments, (e) analysis and interpretation, and (f) identify any correlated variables useful in supporting the proposed theory (in this instance Walther's SIP theory (1992, 1996) within the social psychology framework).

Operationalisation of variables

Operationalization meant the conversion of constructs that may lack the required clarity and precision into reliably measured quantitative variables for statistical analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, 2012).

Definitions of the variables that were operationalized are listed in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1.
Operationalisation of variables

Latent Variables	Operational Definition
Workplace Cyberbullying	Average of the component item scores for each validated factor extracted from the Cyber-Negative Acts. Questionnaire. The scores ranged from *1, Never,* to *5, Daily.*
Organisational Culture	Average of the component items scores for each validated factor extracted from the Organizational Culture Questionnaire. The scores ranged from 1, *Definitely Disagree*, to 5, *Definitely Agree*.
Job Satisfaction	Responses to the single item: *Overall, how satisfied are you in your job?* The scores ranged from 1, *Very Dissatisfied*, to *5, Very Satisfied*
Workplace Stress	Responses to the single item: *How stressful do you find your work environment?* The scores ranged from 1, *Very Unstressful*, to 5, *Very Stressful*.
Overall Work Performance	Responses to the single item: *Overall, how would you rank your experiences at work?* The scores ranged from *1, Very Negative*, to 5, *Very Positive*

The frequency distributions of the operationalised variables were visualised using histograms, and a z-test used to reconfirm the proportions for Hypothesis 1 (section 6.5.4). The proportions of participants who endorsed each of the five categories were described, and the normality of the distributions checked.

Testing of hypotheses

The five hypotheses listed below were tested statistically by generating the appropriate correlation coefficient.

H1: Public servants perceive cyberbullying as manifesting in their workplaces (prevalence, RQ1).

H2: Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as correlated with increased levels of workplace stress (consequences, RQ2).

H3: Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as correlated with decreased overall work performance (consequences, RQ2).

H4: Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as correlated with decreased feelings of job satisfaction (consequences, RQ2).

H5: Workplace cyberbullying levels are correlated with employees' decreased perceptions of organisational cultural efficacy (consequences, RQ2).

The type of correlation coefficient depended upon whether the variables were normally distributed. Pearson's (parametric) correlation coefficient was justified if the variables were normally distributed, whereas Spearman's rank (non-parametric) correlation coefficients was justified if the variables deviated strongly from normality (Field, 2013).

6.5 Results

The subsections below provide details as to how the data taken from the 463 survey respondents was explored using EFA, operationalised and tested. The results of this study are presented in five subsections (a) screening and cleaning of data, (b) description of participant characteristics, (c) Factors extracted using EFA, (d) operationalisation of variables, and (e) testing of hypotheses. Appendix J provides statistical data in addition to the tables below.

6.5.1 Screening and cleaning of data

A total of 463 respondents completed the questionnaire. Apart from 11 participants who did not provide their marital status, there were no missing values. These 11 participants were not removed as marital status was not material to respondents' perceptions regarding workplace cyberbullying. The response rate was 100% for (a) the three single items used to measure job satisfaction, workplace stress, and overall work performance, (b) the 19-items measured using the CNAQ, and (c) the 30-items measured using the OCQ.

6.5.2 Description of participant characteristics

Table 6.2.

Socio-demographic and contextual characteristics of the participants

Characteristic	Group	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	232	50.1%
	Male	231	49.9%
Age (Years)	18-25	67	14.5%
	26-35	120	25.9%
	36-45	124	26.8%
	46-55	105	22.7%
	56-60	37	8.0%
	61-70	10	2.2%
Marital Status	Married	300	64.8%
	Single	152	32.8%
	No Reply	11	2.4%
Highest Educational Level	Grade School	1	0.2%
	High School	100	21.6%
	Undergraduate	252	54.4%
	Masters	93	20.1%
	Doctorate	17	3.7%
Size of Agency	Large (> 5000 employees)	212	45.8%
	Medium (1000 to 5000 employees)	151	32.6%
	Small (≤ 1000 employees)	100	21.6%
Level in Australian Public Service	Level 1 to 6	251	54.2%
	Executive Level 1-2	161	34.8%
	Senior Executive Service Band 1-2	39	8.4%
	Senior Executive Service Band 3	10	2.2%
	Chief Executive Officer	2	0.4%
Employment Status	Full Time Public Servant	378	81.6%
	Part Time Public Servant	42	9.1%
	Contractor Working in Public Sector	43	9.3%
Role	Team Member	204	44.1%
	Team Leader	78	16.8%
	Manager	107	23.1%
	Senior Manager	52	11.2%
	Executive	19	4.1%
	Head of Division/Agency	3	0.6%

Table 6.2 shows the frequency distributions of the socio-demographic and contextual characteristics of the participants. The sample was equally divided between female (232, 50.1%) and male (231, 49.9%) participants. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 70, with about three quarters (349, 75.4%) between the ages of 26 and 55, which is generally comparable to overall public sector demographics

(National Commission of Audit, 2014). About two thirds (300, 64.8%) were married. Over half (252, 54.4%) were educated to undergraduate level, and about one quarter (110, 23.7%) to Masters or Doctorate level. Just under half of the participants *(*212, 45.8%) worked in a large agency (> 5000 employers), with the remainder working in medium to smaller agencies.

The levels across the Australian public sector encompassed a wide range encompassing Level 1 to 6 (staff), Executive Level 1-2 (middle management), Senior Executive Service Bands 1, 2 and 3 and Chief Executive Officer (the Executive), with the majority consisting of about half (251, 54.2%) at Level 1 to 6 (staff) and around one third (161, 34.8%) at the Executive Level 1-2 (middle management). The vast majority of the participants (378, 81.6%) were full time public servants whose roles encompassed Team Member, Team Leader, Manager, Senior Manager, Executive, and Head of Division/Agency, the most frequent of which were Team Member (204, 44.1%) (Level 1 to 6, staff) and Manager (107, 23.1%) (Executive Level 1, middle management).

6.5.3 Factors extracted using EFA

This section describes the two factors EFA extracted from the 19-item CNAQ instrument and three factors extracted from the 30-item OCQ instrument. To reiterate the rule-of-thumb was applied whereby each factor was mapped by a linear combination of at least three inter-related items exhibiting the following properties. These properties consisted of (a) factorial validity, (b) convergent validity, and (c) internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2010). Items with strong loadings ($\geq .5$) contributed most to factorial validity, while items with weak loadings (< .5) contributed little, justifying their exclusion from the factor (Hair et al., 2010). Convergent validity, or sampling accuracy, followed the rule-of-thumb that all factors demonstrate an eigenvalue > 1.0. Internal consistency reliability was demonstrated by a Cronbach's alpha value $\geq .7$ (Zaiontz, 2014b), implying that the component items collectively and uniformly mapped an underlying construct (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 6.3.

Cyber-Negative Acts Questionnaire (CNAQ) two factor solution

Component Item	Loading	
	CNAQ Factor 1	CNAQ Factor 2
CNAQ 13. Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines.	.751	
CNAQ 02. Being ordered to do work through electronic means below your level of competence.	.725	
CNAQ 18. Being exposed to unmanageable workloads.	.700	
CNAQ 15. Excessive monitoring of your work.	.677	
CNAQ 03. Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks.	.665	
CNAQ 11. Having your opinions and views ignored.	.651	
CNAQ 10. Persistent criticism of your work and effort.	.644	
CNAQ 05. Being ignored or excluded.	.598	
CNAQ 09. Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes.	.555	
CNAQ 16. Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g., sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses, bonus).	.548	
CNAQ 06. Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e., habits and background), your attitudes or your private life.		.754
CNAQ 17. Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm.		.738
CNAQ 12. Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with.		.726
CNAQ 04. Spreading of gossip and rumours about you.		.641
CNAQ 01. Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work.		.556
CNAQ 08 Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job.		.547
CNAQ 07. Being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage)		.540
CNAQ 14. Having allegations made against you.		.512
CNAQ 19.Threats of violence of physical abuse.		.480
Initial Eigenvalue	5.43	4.69
Cumulative % of Variance Explained	28.6%	53.3%
Number of Items	10	9
Cronbach's alpha (Internal Consistency Reliability)	.892	.862

Table 6.3 illustrates two workplace cyberbullying factors extracted from the 19-item CNAQ instrument (Coyne et al., In press), entitled CNAQ Factor 1 and

CNAQ Factor 2. As shown in Table 6.3, the sampling accuracy was high (KMO =.928), which is well above the minimum criteria of .5 (Field, 2013; Zaiontz, 2014c). Barlett's test of sphericity is significant $\chi 2$ (171) = 4811.180, $p < 0.001$ (Zaiontz, 2014a). This indicates there are sufficient non- zero inter-correlations to proceed with an EFA.

A relatively high proportion of the variance (53.3%) was explained by the two factors. The 10 component items in CNAQ Factor 1 had strong loadings (.548 to .751); a high eigenvalue (5.43) and good internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .892). The 9 component items in CNAQ Factor 2 also had strong loadings (.480 to .754); a high eigenvalue (4.69) and good internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .862). Consequently, CNAQ Factor 1 and CNAQ Factor 2 are both candidates as valid measures of some dimension of workplace cyberbullying.

Analysis of item intent (Table 6.3) would appear to indicate two factors. Factor 1 pertained to task-related workplace cyberbullying (e.g., unreasonable tasks, unmanageable workloads, excessive monitoring, replacement of responsibilities, lack of entitlement). The items in CNAQ Factor 2 associated with person-related cyberbullying (e.g., insulting or offensive remarks, teasing, sarcasm, spreading gossip and rumours aimed at personal defamation, humiliation, anger, allegations, and threats). The segregation of task and person-related factors are important and will be considered in detail within the discussion chapter, Chapter 7.

Table 6.4.
Organizational Culture Questionnaire (OCQ) three factor solution

Component Items	Loading		
	OCQ Factor 1	OCQ Factor 2	OCQ Factor 3
OCQ29. Good performance is recognised fairly quickly in this organisation.	.789		
OCQ16. We have a promotion system that helps the best person rise to the top.	.775		
OCQ21. In this organisation, people are rewarded in proportion to the excellence of their job performance.	.770		
OCQ13. In this organisation, I am given a chance to participate in setting the performance standards for my job.	.724		
OCQ27R. I have had very little opportunity to say what I think about the goals and standards that are set for my work (Reversed)	.722		
OCQ05. People are proud of belonging to this organisation.	.707		
OCQ28. In this organisation, people are encouraged to initiate projects that they think are important.	.703		
OCQ26. There is a lot of warmth in the relationships between management and other personnel in this organisation.	.693		
OCQ11R. People in this organisation don't really trust each other very much (Reversed)	.681		
OCQ10R. There is not enough reward and recognition given in this organisation for doing good work.	.633		
OCQ25. The rewards and encouragements that you get usually outweigh the threats and criticisms.	.597		
OCQ22. In this organisation, performance is evaluated regularly against agreed upon goals and standards.	.582		
OCQ14R. In this organisation, people don't seem to take much pride in the excellence of their performance (Reversed)	.582		
OCQ19R. I very seldom sit down with my manager to review my overall performance and effectiveness (Reversed)	.572		
OCQ01. The assignments to this organisation are clearly defined.	.570		

OCQ07. The goals I am supposed to achieve in my area realistic.	.549		
OCQ04R. If you make a mistake in this organisation, you will definitely be criticized (Reversed)	.542		
OCQ30. I have a clear idea of what I am supposed to do in my job.	.538		
OCQ02. In this organisation, we set very high standards for performance.	.522		
OCQ17R. People in this organisation tend to be cool and aloof toward each other (Reversed)	.521		
OCQ24R. There is not much encouragement to take on increased responsibility in this organisation (Reversed)	.517		
OCQ06. The policies and goals of this organisation are clearly understood.	.433		
OCQ18R. Our productivity sometimes suffers from lack of organisation and planning (Reversed).		.652	
OCQ12R. Things often seem to be pretty disorganised around here (Reversed)		.591	
OCQ23R. The standards in this organisation do not usually demand the maximum effort of every individual.		.556	
OCQ03R. We don't rely too heavily on individual judgement; almost everything is double checked.		.415	
OCQ15. Management frowns upon your checking everything with them; if you think you've got the right approach, you just go ahead.		.373	
OCQ08. There is a feeling of pressure to continually improve our personal and group performance.			.621
OCQ09. Our philosophy emphasises that people should solve problems by themselves.			.587
OCQ20. Management sets challenging goals.			.561
Initial Eigenvalue	9.22	2.30	1.98
Cumulative Precent of Variance Explained	30.7 %	38.4 %	45.0%
Number of Items	22	5	3
Cronbach's alpha (Internal Consistency Reliability)	.930	.521	.420

Table 6.4 shows EFA extracted three factors from the 30-item OCQ instrument. EFA's total descriptive statistics from the CNAQ and OCQ are presented in Table 6.5. Table 6.4 demonstrates a high sampling accuracy (KMO =.931) and well above the cut off of 0.5 (Field, 2013; Zaiontz, 2014c). Barlett's test of sphericity

is significant $\chi 2$ (435) = 5707.513, $p < 0.001$ (Zaiontz, 2014a). This indicates there are sufficient non-zero inter-correlations to proceed with an EFA (Field, 2013; Hair et al., 2010).

A relatively moderate proportion of the variance (45.0%) was explained by the 30 item scores. The 22 component items in the first organisational culture factor, entitled, OCQ Factor 1, presented as a possible valid and reliable measure of organisational culture, with strong loadings (.517 to .789), a high eigenvalue (9.22) and good internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .930). The 22 items in OCQ Factor 1 related to employees' perceptions as to the efficacy of organisational "structure and procedures" "organisational identity" "reward/tone towards management" and "warmth". Former research reported these dimensions with alphas indicating acceptable to good levels of reliability (Muchinsky, 1976; Zaiontz, 2014b). OCQ Factor 1 identified employees' perceptions regarding formal and informal rules around the delineation of roles, reward and respect rules and processes, and how organisational rules aligned to personal values. The five component items for the second organisational culture factor, entitled OCQ Factor 2, related to "organisational cultural responsibility" (e.g., items emphasising problem resolution) had lower loadings (.373 to .652), an adequate eigenvalue (2.30) and just adequate internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .521). Three component items for the third organisational culture factor, entitled OCQ Factor 3, related to "organisational cultural conflict" (e.g., items related to alignment of team and organisational goals) had high loadings (.561 to .621); an adequate eigenvalue (1.98) and marginal internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .420). It should be noted however that the value of Cronbach is item number depended and may not be a good measure of reliability when the item number is as low as three.

Table 6.5 (p. 249) provides a concise representation of the descriptive statistics described in Tables 6.3 and 6.4. These descriptive statistics relate to the two workplace cyberbullying (CNAQ Factor 1 and CNAQ Factor 2) and three organisational culture factors (OCQ Factor 1, OCQ Factor 2 and OCQ Factor 3). Note that OCQ Factor 2 and OCQ Factor 3 are italicised to indicate that they did not reach accepted thresholds.

Table 6.5.
Summary of descriptive statistics

Factors	No. of items	Factor Loadings	Eigen Value	Cum. Variance %	Alpha	KMO	Sphericity	Sig (*p*)
CNAQ Factor 1	10	.548 to .751	5.43	28.6	.892	.928	4811.18	< .001
CNAQ Factor 2	9	.480 to .754	4.69	53.3	.862			
OCQ Factor 1	22	.517 to .789	9.22	30.7	.930	.931	5707.51	< .001
OCQ Factor 2	*5*	*.373 to .652*	*2.30*	*38.4*	*.521*			
OCQ Factor 3	*3*	*.561 to .621*	*1.98*	*45.0*	*.420*			

6.5.4 Operationalisation of variables

The proportions of participants who endorsed each of the original five categories of variables (*Workplace Cyberbullying, Organisation Culture, Job Performance, Job Satisfaction* and *Workplace Stress*) are described in this section. The histogram (Figure 6.1, p. 250) represents a top level indication of the degree of normality associated with the distribution of values. These variables were operationalised by averaging the item scores across each factor. The six variables were titled CNAQ (task-related workplace cyberbullying) Factor 1 and CNAQ (person-related workplace cyberbullying) Factor 2, OCQ (organisation culture) Factor 1, Job Satisfaction, Workplace Stress, and Overall Work Performance.

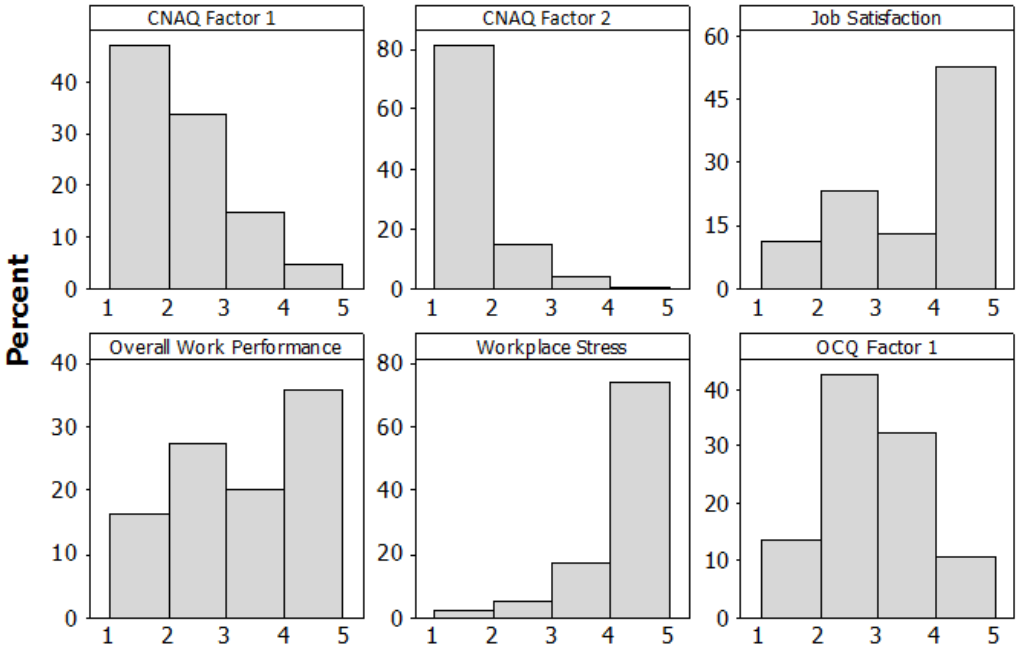


Figure 6.1. Frequency distribution histograms of the variables.

Both workplace cyberbullying factors (CNAQ Factor 1 – task-related workplace cyberbullying, and CNAQ Factor 2 – person-related workplace cyberbullying) were strongly positively skewed. Scores for the variable entitled Job Satisfaction and Workplace Stress were negatively skewed. The distribution of the remaining variables was reasonably symmetric if not normal.

Score distributions for the two workplace cyberbullying dimensions (n = 463) were as follows:

CNAQ Factor 1 (task-related workplace cyberbullying):

- Score 1 - 2 (*Never* to *Now and Then*) = 46.8%
- Score 2 - 3 (*Now and Then* to *Monthly*) = 33.7%
- Score 3 - 4 (*Monthly* to *Weekly*) = 14.7%
- Score 4 - 5 (*Weekly* to *Daily*) = 4.8%

CNAQ Factor 2 (Person-related workplace cyberbullying):

- Score 1 - 2 (*Never* to *Now and Then*) = 81.2%
- Score 2 - 3 (*Now and Then* to *Monthly*) = 14.5%
- Score 3 - 4 (*Monthly* to *Weekly*) = 3.9%
- Score 4 - 5 (*Weekly* to *Daily*) = 0.4%

These scores demonstrated that about half (46.8%) scored between 1 and 2 (*never – now and again*) for CNAQ Factor 1 (task-related workplace cyberbullying), with over half of the participants (53.2%) scored between 2 and 5 (*now and again, monthly, weekly, daily*). This implied that over half of survey respondents had observed or experienced some level of task-related workplace cyberbullying over the past six months. The scores also demonstrated that the majority of participants (81.2%) scored between 1 and 2 (*never – now and again*) for CNAQ Factor 2 (person-related workplace cyberbullying), with a small number of participants (18.8%) scored between 2 and 5 (*now and again, monthly, weekly, daily*). This implied that only a fifth of participants experienced person-related workplace cyberbullying over the past six months.

A MINITAB Z-test was used to compare the score percentages and reaffirm these operationalised findings by comparing the proportions for CNAQ Factor 1 (task-related workplace cyberbullying) and CNAQ Factor 2 (person-related workplace cyberbullying) for Hypothesis 1. The z-test found that the proportion of participants who scored 1 to 2 (*Never* to *Now and Then*) against CNAQ Factor 1 (task-related workplace cyberbullying) equated to 46.8%. This was less than the proportion of participants who scored 2 to 5 (*Now and Then – Monthly – Weekly – Daily*) and equated to 53.2% ($z = 1.91$, $p = .028$). These results indicate that a substantial number of survey respondents (53.2%) had experienced task-related workplace cyberbullying. The proportion of participants who scored 1 to 2 (*Never* to *Now and Then*) against CNAQ Factor 2 (person-related workplace cyberbullying) equated to 81.2% and therefore significantly greater than the proportion who scored 2 to 5 (*Now and then – Monthly – Weekly – Daily*) and equated to 18.8% ($z = 24.87$, $p < .001$). These results indicate that only a fifth of survey respondents had observed or experienced person-related workplace cyberbullying.

Table 6.6.
Distribution scores for job satisfaction

Distribution scores	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
Very Dissatisfied	52	11.2	11.2
Dissatisfied	107	23.1	34.3
Neutral	61	13.2	47.5
Satisfied	196	42.3	89.8
Very Satisfied	47	10.2	100.0
Total	463	100.0	

Table 6.6 shows the distribution of scores for the job satisfaction variable. Over half of the participants (52.5%) scored 4 – *satisfied,* to 5 – *very satisfied,* implying that most participants they were satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs. A third of participants (34.3%) scored between 1 - *very dissatisfied*, and 2 - *dissatisfied*, implying that they were very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with their jobs, while the remainder (13.2%) scored 3 or *neutral*, implying that they neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their jobs within the context of workplace cyberbullying. This distribution indicated public servants were generally satisfied with their jobs.

Table 6.7.
Distribution scores for work performance

Distribution scores	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
Very negative	76	16.4	16.4
Negative	127	27.4	43.8
Neutral	94	20.3	64.1
Positive	144	31.1	95.2
Very Positive	22	4.8	100.0
Total	463	100.0	

Table 6.7 shows the distribution scores for the work performance variable. Close to half of the participants (43.8%) scored between 1 – *very negative*, and 2 - *negative,* implying slightly less than half the employees negatively ranked their

workplace performance. Over one third of the participants (35.8%) scored 4 – *positive*, to 5 – *very positive*, implying a smaller proportion of participants positively ranked their overall work performance. The remainder (20.3%) scored 3 - *neutral*, implying participants had neither positive nor negative perceptions of their work performance. This finding implied that a higher proportion of participants negatively rated their work performance.

Table 6.8.
Distribution scores for job stress

Distribution scores	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
Very unstressful	12	2.6	2.6
Unstressful	26	5.6	8.2
Neutral	80	17.3	25.5
Stressful	202	43.6	69.1
Very Stressful	143	30.9	100.0
Total	463	100.0	

Table 6.8 shows the distribution scores for the job stress variable. Approximately three quarters of the participants (74.5%) scored between 4 – *very stressful* and 5 –*stressful*, implying that a significant number of participants perceived the workplace as highly stressful. Only a few participants (8.2%) scored between 1 – *very unstressful*, and 2 - *unstressful*, implying that they did not find the workplace stressful, with the remainder (17.3%) scored between 2 and 3, implying that they found the workplace neither *stressful* nor *unstressful*. Overall, a sizeable proportion of participants found the workplace stressful.

The sixth variable, entitled Organisational Culture, was measured using OCQ Factor 1. This factor related to public servants' perceptions of organisational efficacy and pertained to the effectiveness of formal rules governing organisational structure, identity, reward and warmth (interaction levels) in resolving workplace cyberbullying events. Over half of participants (56.2%) scored between 1 (13.4%) and 2 (42.8%) (*strongly disagree – inclined to disagree*) and less than half (43.8%) scored between 3 (32.6%) and 4 (11.2%) (*inclined to agree – strongly agree*); implying that participants generally perceived organisational culture (i.e., rules and

processes, legislation, policies and governance processes) was struggling to respond, resolve and mitigate workplace cyberbullying.

6.5.5 Testing of hypotheses

On examination of the histograms revealed the variables deviated from normality. As a consequence the non-parametric variant of correlational analysis, Spearman's rho (ρ) was selected as the appropriate correlation coefficient over Pearson's correlation coefficient (Field, 2013).

Table 6.9.
Matrix of Spearman's Rank Non-Parametric Correlation Coefficients

Hypothesis	Variable	Task-related Workplace Cyberbullying (CNAQ Factor 1)	Person-related Workplace Cyberbullying (CNAQ Factor 2)
2	Workplace Stress	+.524***	+.448***
3	Overall Work Performance	-.701***	-.621***
4	Job Satisfaction	-.545***	-.484***
5	Organizational Culture (OCQ Factor 1)	-.683***	-.581***

Note: *** Significant correlation at $p < .001$

Table 6.9 displays the Spearman's (non-parametric) rank correlation coefficients (rho) between cyberbullying variables and environmental variables (additional statistical data can be viewed an Appendix J). A coefficient of +1 or -1 indicates a perfect positive or a negative relationship respectively where values of +/- .10 represent a small effect, +/- .30 medium and +/- .05 a large effect (Field, 2013). All of the correlation coefficients observed significantly large effects at +/- .50, and were statistically significant at $p < .001$.

A MINITAB Z-test was used to reaffirm the operationalised findings and compare the proportions for CNAQ Factor 1 (task- related workplace cyberbullying) and CNAQ Factor 2 (person-related workplace cyberbullying). Details of the z-test are found under subsection 6.5.4 entitled Operationalisation of variables.

Substantiation of Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: The combined operationalised findings and z-test confirmed that over half of participants or 53.2% ($z = 1.91$, $p = .028$) observed or experience work-related workplace cyberbullying, while a fifth of survey participants or 18.8% ($z = 24.87$, $p < .001$) observed or experienced person-related workplace cyberbullying over the past six months. Consequently, Hypothesis 1 was supported, indicating public servants perceived cyberbullying as manifesting in their workplaces.
- Hypothesis 2: The positive correlation coefficients ($\rho = +.524$ and $+.448$) supported the hypothesis that workplace cyberbullying is positively correlated with workplace stress, indicating employees perceived workplace cyberbullying with increased levels of workplace stress.
- Hypothesis 3: The negative correlation coefficients ($\rho = -.701$ and $-.621$) supported the hypothesis that workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as strongly negatively correlated with overall work performance, indicating employees perceived workplace cyberbullying with lowered work performance.
- Hypothesis 4: The negative correlation coefficients ($\rho = -.545$ and $-.483$) supported the hypothesis that workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as negatively correlated with job satisfaction, indicating employees perceived workplace cyberbullying as lowering job satisfaction.
- Hypothesis 5: The negative correlation coefficients ($\rho = -.683$ and $-.581$) supported the hypothesis that workplace cyberbullying is negatively correlated with employees' perceptions of organisational culture, indicating employees perceived workplace cyberbullying with inefficacious organisational culture (i.e., legislation, policies create organisational rules and regulations ratified through governance processes).

6.6 Conclusion

Study 3's collection and analysis, and results provided statistical data in response to the focus question: What is the prevalence, and what are the consequences, of negative workplace cyber communication (cyberbullying) in the Australian public sector? Two research questions were shaped from this focus question and pertained to public servants' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying prevalence rates, and workplace cyberbullying consequences. Both research questions formed Study 3's five hypotheses. The five hypotheses were explored using sequential exploratory mixed method design across two phases comprising two qualitative studies (Phase 1) and a quantitative study (Phase 2), where Phase 1's results were used to develop and inform Phase 2's purpose and design (Bergman, 2008, 2010, 2011; Plano Clark, 2010). In this regard, the themes, concepts and narrative from Phase 1's two qualitative studies were used to inform and enhance Phase 2's survey. This data triangulation arising from sequential qualitative and quantitative analysis helped to increase the validity of the results and produce a more complete discussion that informed theory and practice (refer to Chapter 7).

A three part survey collected nationally-based public servants' perceptions on (part 1) workplace cyberbullying, (part 2) workplace stress, job satisfaction and job performance, and (part 3) organisational culture (Coyne et al., In press; Cunny & Perri, 1991; Loo, 2002; Muchinsky, 1976; Nagy, 2002) from a nationally-based convenience sample gathered through public sector specific online and offline snowball processes. Findings were analysed using *Social Information Processing* (SIP) *Theory* (Walther, 1992, 1996, 2004, 2007, 2009, 2011; Walther & Burgoon, 1992, Walther, Loh, & Granka, 2005) through the social psychology framework. SIP provided a solid basis for this research into workplace cyberbullying within the legislatively governed and rules-based institution known such as the Australian public sector. The theoretical robustness provided by SIP was crucial in light of the reasonably small number of workplace cyberbullying studies with theoretical frameworks (Coyne et al., In press; Lim, Cortina, & Magley, 2008; Lim & Teo, 2009; Rivers, Chesney, & Coyne, 2011).

Study 3's quantitative study provided a sufficiently large sample (n = 463) to explore the phenomenon's underlying factor structure using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) (Field, 2013). EFA suited this research given the investigation was

exploratory in nature, with no expectations as to the number or structure of the factors extracted (Fabrigar et al., 1999). EFA condensed the 49 multidimensional item scores collected from the two survey instruments (19-item CNAQ and 30-item OCQ). Varimax rotation was used to extract five factors by differentiating item scores into discrete and identifiable components on the basis of their factor loading (Hair et al., 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Three internally consistent factors (a. task-related workplace cyberbullying, b. person-related workplace cyberbullying and c. organisational cultural efficacy) that demonstrated acceptable (a) factorial validity, (b) convergent validity, and (c) internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2010).

Task-related workplace cyberbullying (CNAQ Factor 1) arose from items relating to unreasonable tasks, unmanageable workloads, excessive monitoring, replacement of responsibilities, and lack of entitlement (Einarsen et al., 2009). Person-related workplace cyberbullying (CNAQ Factor 2) arose from the items associated with insulting or offensive remarks, teasing, sarcasm, spreading gossip and rumours aimed at personal defamation, humiliation, anger, allegations, and threats. Perceptions of organisation cultural efficacy (OCQ Factor 1) aligned to the four dimensions of "structure and procedures" "organizational identification" "reward/affective tone towards management" and "warmth" identified by Muchinsky (1976).

Six variables were operationalised. These included (1). Task-related workplace cyberbullying: CNAQ Factor 1, (2). Person-related workplace cyberbullying: CNAQ Factor 2, (3). Workplace stress, (4). Job satisfaction, (5). Job performance, and (6). Organisational culture (efficacy) (OCQ Factor 1). A composite score for each participant was calculated by summing scores across items then averaging thus providing a more reliable measure than a single item score (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, 2012). The frequency distributions of each variable were illustrated using histograms (section 6.5.4). The histogram demonstrated that the majority of participants (53.2%) reported having observed or experienced task-related workplace cyberbullying, while a smaller number (18.8%) had observed or experienced person-related workplace cyberbullying. Overall, as illustrated by the histogram, 72% of participants reported having experienced or observed some form of workplace cyberbullying. In regards to the impact of workplace cyberbullying on workplace stress, the histogram demonstrated a significant number of participants (74.5%)

ranked their workplace as highly stressful, while nearly half the participants (43.8%) negatively ranked their workplace performance. Over half (56.2%) perceived organisational culture as inefficacious, while 34.3% reported feeling dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their jobs. Examination of the histograms revealed the variables deviated from normality, consequently Spearman's rho (ρ) was used as the appropriate non-parametric correlation coefficient (Field, 2013). The resulting correlation coefficients showed significantly large effects at +/- 5, and were statistically significant at $p < .001$ (Zaiontz, 2014c).

Study 3's empirical evidence found public servants perceived workplace cyberbullying as manifesting (or prevalent) in their workplaces. Workplace cyberbullying manifested in two forms (a) task-related, and (b) person-related. The statistical analysis also suggested that workplace cyberbullying increased employees' perceptions of job stress and job performance. Job satisfaction was less clear as the findings indicated the majority of participants enjoyed their job, while the correlations indicated decreased perceptions of job satisfaction. In real terms, this probably indicates that public servants in the main like their job due to a variety of reasons (e.g., flexibility of work hours, fitness programs, childcare support), however, workplace cyberbullying was seen as a distractor from this sense of job well being. Workplace cyberbullying was, however, clearly perceived by employees as impacting on the organisational culture. Given the decreasing the efficacy of organisational culture (e.g., clear policies, rules, regulations, and governance frameworks guiding employee behaviour, performance and recognition processes) in effectively responding to workplace cyberbullying events. Study 3's quantitative data and Studies 1 and 2 qualitative data is discussed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusions

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter triangulates the empirical findings from each phase of the study: Phase 1's two qualitative studies (i.e., Chapters 4 and 5) and Phase 2's quantitative study (Chapter 6). Together, these three studies investigated the two research questions and five hypotheses. As previously highlighted, this research represents the first published academic study to examine workplace cyberbullying within the context of the Australian public sector. In this regard, this research investigated government employees' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying in their organisations, its impact on their workplace stress, job satisfaction and performance, and their perceptions as to the efficacy of existing organisational processes in dealing with the phenomenon. This research is topical within the context of education, given the likely implications of the empirical evidence in the formation of new, or modification of existing, anti-cyberbullying education and training programs in the public sector. Potential implications of this research for theory and practice, study limitations and directions for future research are also discussed. The conclusion presented in this chapter represents a culmination of ideas, insights, and outcomes arising from this research.

This research used a national convenience sample comprising Local, State and Territory, and Commonwealth public servants. The Literature Review (Chapter 2) introduced academic studies, government reports, and theories on aggressive human behaviours, bullying and harassment, face-to-face (offline) bullying and cyberbullying both within and outside the work context. The Research Design (Chapter 3) justified the use of sequential mixed method approach in this research and described how this methodology and design framed collection and analytic principles. This chapter is comprised of a number of sections. These section comprise, (a) research questions, (b) a brief summary of results, (c) a triangulated discussion using the three studies empirical evidence against the two research questions and five hypotheses, (d) contributions to theory | *Social Information Processing* (SIP) *Theory,* (e) conclusions, and (f) directions for future research including a plan to disseminate results.

7.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The investigative inquiry of this research derived from a core research theme:

> What is the prevalence, and what are the consequences, of negative workplace cyber communication (cyberbullying) in the Australian public sector?

This core theme shaped two research questions that were subsequently corroborated by empirical evidence identified through three studies:

1. How do Australian public sector employees perceive cyberbullying as manifesting within Australian public sector work environments? (prevalence, RQ1).
2. How do Australian public sector employees perceive workplace cyberbullying as affecting their workplace stress, job satisfaction, work performance, and organisational culture? (consequences, RQ 2).

The five hypotheses stemming from these two research questions influenced the third qualitative study, and encompassed:

H1. Public servants perceive cyberbullying as manifesting in their workplaces (prevalence, RQ1).

H2. Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as positively correlated with increased levels of workplace stress (consequences, RQ2).

H3. Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as negatively correlated with overall work performance (consequences, RQ2).

H4. Workplace cyberbullying is perceived by employees as negatively correlated with feelings of job satisfaction (consequences, RQ2).

H5. Workplace cyberbullying levels are negatively correlated with employees' perceptions of organisational cultural efficacy (consequences, RQ2).

7.3 SUMMARY

As indicated in previous chapters, this study is the first known empirical research to examine Australian public sector employees' perceptions of the impact of workplace cyberbullying on their stress levels, job satisfaction and performance, and organisation culture. In regards to culture, this research examined perceptions as to

how public sector legislation and policies, rules and regulations - as enlivened through agency-specific governance processes – are seen by employees as effectively dealing with workplace cyberbullying.

The Literature Review revealed extensive research into traditional face-to-face workplace bullying prevalence rates and consequences thereof (Boucaut, 2001, 2003; Einarsen et al., 2011; Hershcovis, 2011; Zapf, 1999), and juvenile and youth cyberbullying (Cross et al., 2009; Hinduja & Patchin, 2013; Li, 2007; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006, 2012; Rivers & Noret, 2010; Smith et al., 2008). This review also found that comparatively few studies have examined workplace cyberbullying (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Coyne et al., In press; D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Farley et al., 2015; West et al., 2014), and less within the context of Australian workplaces (Privitera & Campbell, 2009). Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical research into employees' perceptions in this regard. This gap is further substantiated by the Commonwealth's 2013 State of the Service Report (2013c), which reported cyberbullying as a workplace behaviour.

A sequential exploratory mixed methods approach (Chapter 3) was used to explore the two research questions through two phases: Phase 1 comprised two qualitative studies while Phase 2 comprised one quantitative study. A combination of mixed qualitative and quantitative research methodologies enabled the rich qualitative information to illustrate and corroborate the statistical data (Bergman, 2008, 2010, 2011; Plano Clark, 2010). The qualitative and quantitative results were examined through the lens of *Social Information Processing* (SIP) *Theory* (Walther, 1992, 1994), using the principles of social psychology theory, both of which represented a particular strength of this research.

This theoretical foundation was crucial given the reasonably restricted number of studies into workplace cyberbullying that have incorporated theoretical frameworks (Coyne et al., In press; Lim et al., 2008; Lim & Teo, 2009; Rivers, Chesney, & Coyne, 2011; Suler, 2004; Vance & Siponen, 2010; Zhang & Leidner, 2014). Critically, the use of SIP theory assisted in explaining public servants' perceptions of their workplaces. This was particularly useful in delving into how employees interpret CMC (Walther, 1992, 1994) through their group and organisational culture, attitudes and behaviours (Boucaut, 2001, 2003). A total sample of 614 Australian public sector employees working across Local, State,

Territory, and Commonwealth government organisations, within specialised and administrative, and staff and managerial roles.

Information from Phase 1's twenty-four face-to-face interviews (Chapter 4) and 127 qualitative anonymous online survey responses (Chapter 5) were used to gather an initial "taste" of employees' perceptions. A snowball non-probability sampling strategy was used to gather participants (Creswell, 2012; Punch, 2005), the analysis of which revealed organisational processes (referred to as organisational culture in this research) as a key additional element perceived by employees within the context of workplace cyberbullying. Consequently, an organisation culture instrument was included to Study 3's survey.

Phase 1's data was thematically analysed using the lexical software tool Leximancer Version 4.0 (Smith, 2011). A total of nine themes were identified and explored as a result of the computer-aided lexical analysis, and provided empirical evidence substantiating the two research questions. These nine themes (Study 1: *people, media, cyberbullying, work and agency*, and Study 2: *emails, messages, bullying, sent*) confirmed that public servants perceived workplace cyberbullying as manifesting in their organisations (RQ1). Both studies' thematic narratives substantiated employees perception of workplace cyber platforms as enabling tools facilitating cyberbullying arising from internal and external sources. Additionally, employees reported lowered job performance and job satisfaction, increased stress levels, and a general awareness that organisational culture (i.e., procedures and processes) were largely ineffective in dealing with this new online bullying communications and behaviour (RQ2).

Study 3 (Chapter 6) collected data via an online survey comprising a 19-item cyberbullying instrument (CNAQ), three single items regarding work stress, job satisfaction and overall work performance, and a 30-item Organizational Culture Questionnaire (OCQ) (Coyne et al., In press; Cunny & Perri, 1991; Loo, 2002; Muchinsky, 1976; Nagy, 2002). Statistical data from Study 3 provided a sufficiently large quantitative sample (n = 463) to explore the underlying factor structure associated with the identified instruments. This process was conducted using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) via the SPSS statistical software. With this in mind, EFA was used in this study given the researcher's lack of expectations regarding the number or structure of the factors that would be extracted. The process

integrated the qualitative data to interpret the significance of the quantitative findings discussed below. Two workplace cyberbullying factors (CNAQ Factor 1 and CNAQ Factor 2) and three organisational culture factors (OCQ Factors 1, 2 and 3) were extracted using principal components with varimax rotation (Hair et al., 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

In line with Einarsen et al.'s (2009) NAQ-Revised behavioural inventory, the modified Cyber-NAQ (Coyne et al., In press) found two workplace cyberbullying factors that aligned to (a) task-related and (b) person-related cyberbullying respectively. Out of the three OCQ factors, the only valid and reliable measure of organisational culture (OCQ Factor 1) aligned to perceptions as to the efficacy of an organisation's "structure and procedures," "organisational identification," "reward/affective tone towards management," and "warmth" (Muchinsky, 1976). Six variables were operationalised. These six operationalised variables included two workplace cyberbullying factors (CNAQ Factor 1: task-related cyberbullying; CNAQ Factor 2: person-related cyberbullying), three single-item measures for Job Satisfaction, Overall Work Performance; and Workplace Stress, and the one valid and reliable measure for organisational culture (OCQ Factor 1).

Frequency distributions, illustrated using histograms, revealed that most participants had observed or experienced some form of workplace cyberbullying, albeit task-related cyberbullying, was deemed more prevalent than person-related cyberbullying. A third of survey respondents reported being dissatisfied with their jobs (34.3%), and a significant proportion reported experiencing workplace stress (74.5%) and dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of their organisation's explicit culture in dealing with workplace cyberbullying (56.2%). Nearly half of respondents (43.8%) negatively rated their work performance within the context of workplace cyberbullying. Examination of the histograms revealed the variables deviated from normality, and as a consequence Spearman's rho (ρ) was selected as the appropriate correlation coefficient (Field, 2013). The resulting correlation coefficients showed significantly large effects at +/- 5, and were statistically significant at $p < .001$. All five hypotheses were supported.

7.4 DISCUSSION

This section considers the study's two research questions and five hypotheses. Each research question is addressed in turn, and empirical findings from Phases 1 and 2 are used in combination in response to both lines of inquiry. Emerging themes from the Study 1's face-to-face interviewees included:

- people – straddles both prevalence and behavioural consequences: RQ1 and RQ2 (regarding the workplace positions of the perpetrators and targets),
- media – prevalence rates: RQ1 (types of work-based cyber technology employees report as used in conveying bullying messages),
- work – prevalence rates and behavioural consequences: RQ1 and RQ2 (type of work conducted by employees relating to the type of cyberbullying work-related messages),
- cyberbullying – prevalence rates and behavioural consequences: RQ1 and RQ2 (online workplace bullying communications and online behaviours), and
- agency – behavioural and cultural consequences: RQ2, Hypothesis 5 (work-related messages conveyed across and between government and non-government organisations).

These themes were found to parallel those identified from Study 2's qualitative survey respondents:

- emails – prevalence rates and behavioural consequences: RQ1 and RQ2 (the online communication behaviours observed when using work-based cyber technologies; emails are viewed as the key cyber technology used to convey bullying messages),
- messages – prevalence rates and behavioural consequences: RQ1 and RQ2 (the type and content of inter and intra work-related messages, all of which influence employees' behaviours),
- bullying (online) – prevalence rates and behavioural consequences: RQ1 & RQ2 (contributing online workplace actions and behaviours, impacting employees' behaviours) and

- sent: behavioural and cultural consequences: RQ2 (two concepts; online bullying messages to individuals, groups, and across the agency, or agencies and potentially publically impacting employees, and perceptions of organisational culture by both internal and external observers).

Empirical evidence from this thesis represents a significant contribution to three main areas of workplace cyberbullying research. Firstly, organisational cyber technologies available to public sector staff are broad and include work email, phones, SMS, instant messaging, social and virtual communities. These technologies were perceived by public servants as available via a range of internet enabled desktop computers, or mobile platforms, such as smart devices or tablets, that allow employees to "virtually" connect to the workplace databases and cyber communication platforms.

Second, this research progressed beyond existing workplace cyberbullying studies. This was undertaken by asking Australian government employees' their perceptions regarding the incidence and impact (e.g., workplace stress, job satisfaction and performance, and efficacy of organisational culture), of the phenomenon in government agencies.

Third, this research expanded upon SIP's theoretical perspective that, given that lack of text-based CMC's tone and inflection used in professional online communications, employees instead use their team or group's accepted behaviours to interpret online cyber communications. This research found that public sector employees' online behaviour is influenced by two forms of organisational culture: one explicit (i.e., public sector-wide code of conduct and code of ethics, legislation underpinned by agency-specific policies and governance frameworks) and the other implicit (i.e., accepted behaviours expressed by the employee's team or sub-group).

Chapter outline

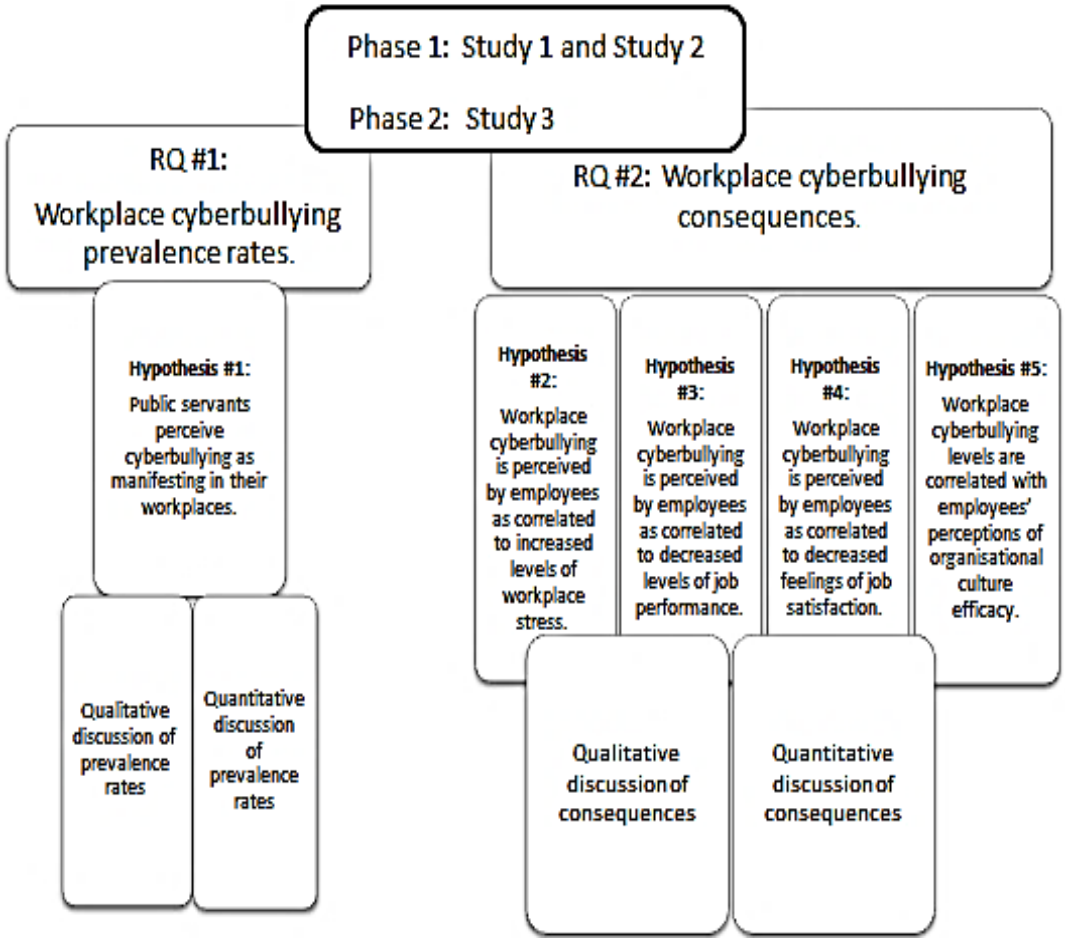


Figure 7.1. Chapter 7's structure: Cascading RQs and five hypotheses and Literature Review.

As shown in Figure 7.1, the three studies were influenced by the research questions. Hypothesis 1 stemmed from RQ1 and hypotheses 2, 3,4 and 5 stemmed from RQ2. This structure is reiterated in this chapter. In this regard, the empirical evidence from the three studies substantiate both research questions and five hypotheses. For example, RQ1 is discussed within the context of the first hypothesis, both of which relate to public servants' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying prevalence rates. This section discusses participants' perceptions of task-related and person-related workplace cyberbullying (Einarsen et al., 2009) together with the four conceptual elements aligned to workplace cyberbullying.

As forecast in the Research Design (Chapter 3), a combination of qualitative and quantitative evidence was used to enrich and strengthen the discussion and conclusion. In this regard, evidence from Phase 2's qualitative studies illustrated and corroborated the data from Study 3'quantitative study, thus providing a deeper

exploration of the underlying meanings identified in this workplace cyberbullying research (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

7.5 RQ 1 | PREVALENCE RATES

This section discusses evidence pertaining to the RQ1: How do Australian public sector employees perceive cyberbullying as manifesting within Australian public sector work environments? Hypothesis 1 was shaped by RQ1, both of which relate to public servants' perceptions of cyberbullying prevalence rates. Subsections under section 7.5 discuss the statistical and qualitative results supporting RQ1 and Hypothesis 1, and are enhanced by information discussed in the Literature Review. In this regard, subsection 7.5.2 and 7.5.2 are therefore arranged in the following manner:

- task-related and person-related workplace cyberbullying (quantitative),
- intent and intensity – accidental and malicious (qualitative),
- power – overt, covert and anonymous (qualitative),
- repetitiveness and public, mass broadcasting (qualitative), and
- transitioning - face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying (qualitative).

As indicated in the Literature Review, traditional face-to-face workplace bullying occurs in varying degrees or levels of frequency, intensity, and duration (Davenport et al., 2002; Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2007). These studies found that employees who are exposed to ongoing aggressive workplace behaviours experience higher than normal levels of stress and reduced job satisfaction (Cunny & Perri, 1991), and job performance/ranking (Akinbowale et al., 2014). This outcome aligns with international medical research, which found that ongoing high levels of stress activates adrenalin-related cortisol levels (flight or fight response), leading to impaired cognitive performance, higher blood pressure and cholesterol, lowered immunity and inflammatory responses (Bellelli et al., 2002; Walkdstein & Katzel, 2005). These international studies and others indicate that it is the scale and nature (ferocity) of the perpetrator's workplace aggression that contribute to the target's perceptions of workplace stress and anxiety, resulting in lowered self-confidence and depression, decreased job satisfaction and performance (Giumetti et al., 2012).

7.5.1 Hypothesis 1

Public servants perceived cyberbullying as manifesting in their workplaces.

7.5.2 Quantitative evidence

Statistical evidence from Study 3 (Chapter 6) substantiated RQ1 and Hypothesis 1. Factor analysis of the 19-item CNAQ (Coyne et al., In press) revealed a two-factor solution of task-related and person-related workplace cyberbullying, the response proportions on a five point Likert style scale were compared using a MINITAB Z-test. These results found that, over the past six months, a significant proportion ($p < .05$) of survey participants experienced task-related and/or person-related workplace cyberbullying. As illustrated by the histogram, 53.2% of participants experienced task-related workplace cyberbullying, while significantly less (18.8%) experienced person-related workplace cyberbullying.

Australian public servants' segregation between task-related and person-related workplace cyberbullying is significant and is somewhat comparable to UK research across university employees (Coyne et al., In press). However, given the hypothesis aimed to determine public servants' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying manifesting in organisations, and as illustrated by the histogram, it is significant that 72% of participating public servants reported either experiencing or observing some form of workplace cyberbullying during the past six months. This statistically significant result supports the first hypothesis. Parallel qualitative data will now be considered below in an attempt to validate and enliven this hypothesis.

7.5.3 Qualitative evidence

The thematic narrative extracted from Studies 1 and 2 (Chapters 4 and 5) substantiated RQ1 and Hypothesis 1, and enlarged upon the statistical results found in Study 3 (Chapter 6). In this regard, the research in this thesis confirmed that public servants perceived workplace cyberbullying as manifesting within and across government agencies. Workplace cyberbullying is defined as "bullying behaviour that occurs through media and communication devices [and] include hurtful or abusive mobile telephone calls, text messages, email, abusive or threatening statements made in chat rooms, on bulletin boards or via newsgroups...posting of inappropriate photographs, videos or comments on social networking sites, web pages and blogs" (Monks & Coyne, 2011, p. 214). As indicated in the Literature

Review, public sector employees experienced workplace cyberbullying behaviour in abusive emails (Baruch, 2005; Carlson & Zmud, 1999; Muhl, 2003; Romm & Pliskin, 1997), where employees or supervisors distribute rude, harassing or bullying emails. This behaviour was perceived as "carried out by a group or individual... repeatedly and over time against a target who cannot easily defend him or herself" (Smith et al., 2008, p. 376). Repetitive workplace cyberbullying pertains to (a) continued online bullying communication conducted over time, and (b) one text, email or website message, photo or video that is mass broadcast and able to be read and re-read (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

Public servants also reported that workplace cyberbullying was perceived as mainly focused on harming, discomforting, or defaming the self-confidence and reputation of the target (Besley, 2009; Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006), and could potentially be received anytime during the day or night (Kowalski et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010). Further research is required to clarify whether online bullying at work results from perpetrators' increased usage of the new technologies to convey abusive communications, or whether cyber platforms' characteristics are simply evolving aggressive human-to-human workplace behaviour (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006).

Examples of generic workplace cyberbullying literature has revealed both person-related and task-related online behaviour (Coyne et al., In press;), however, this particular dichotomy had yet to be broached within the context of cyberbullying in the Australian public sector (APSC, 2013c). It is worth mentioning that some indications that both types of bullying behaviour are reported within the context of traditional face-to-face bullying in the public sector (APSC, 2013c). For example, the Commonwealth's APSC State of the Service Report 2012-13 (APSC, 2013c) reported face-to-face bullying arising from personal differences and/or work performance issues.

Cyber technologies used in workplace cyberbullying

Empirical evidence from Study 2's qualitative survey found that 100% of participants felt they had experienced workplace cyberbullying by email, 98% by telephone calls, 44% by text messaging, 42% by instant messaging (IM), 36% by video conferencing and 28% by social media websites. This indicates workplace cyberbullying is conveyed across a variety of online technologies that are available

in government workplaces. In general, survey respondents reported the following characteristics:

- email was used to attack, ignore, harass and isolate by, firstly, internal supervisors, colleagues, staff, groups, and secondly, public servants working in other government agencies and external clients,
- telephone conversations were reported as used by supervisors, colleagues or external clients and pertained to persistent, rude, harassing, and threatening phone calls which involved verbal abuse, swearing, name calling and threats of legal action,
- text messaging tended to be used in personal and abusive or rude attacks used to intimidate the target,
- instant messaging was used to gossip and privately deride work colleagues and/or direct reports (staff) working in different physical locations,
- video conferencing was used to mute and isolate conference participants, and
- social media websites were used by both internal (other government employees) and external (non-government clients and customers) workplace cyberbullies; Facebook, Twitter, YouTube platforms were used by both internal and external perpetrators to stalk, monitor, harass, comment on, or convey photos and videos to gain power over supervisors, staff and colleagues.

This evidence illustrates that public servants experience workplace cyberbullying, and that this negative online communication is conducted a variety of cyber technologies, and can be described as task-related and person-related workplace cyberbullying.

Task and person-related cyberbullying

Empirical evidence demonstrates that government employees perceive task-related and person-related cyberbullying similarly, as both types may be broadly disseminated and cause embarrassment and reputational and/or career damage for the target (Besley, 2009; Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). Both types of workplace cyberbullying were perceived as precipitated by internal and

external sources. Internal sources included the target's supervisor/s, colleagues/peers, and staff within the agency or public sector clients and customers from other government organisations, or externally by non-government clients and customers. Workplace cyberbullying was perceived as having the potential of being promulgated anywhere, and at any time, either on a one-to-one basis between the perpetrator/s and target, across the target's team, including direct and indirect supervisors, (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013). This online bullying was reported as sourced from across target's teams, from other teams within their agency or other government agencies, or broadcast by internal or external perpetrators across public websites (Slonje & Smith, 2008). While this finding has been alluded to within various public sector reports, and high level employee resolution policies developed (APSC, 2013c, 2014b), this is the first empirically-based research that identifies Australian public servants as experiencing workplace cyberbullying from internal and external sources.

Targets also reported workplace cyberbullying created uncertainty on both a professional and personal level. Similar to traditional face-to-face bullying, targets experiencing internally-based cyberbullying from supervisors felt powerless to defend themselves (Hershcovis, 2011). However, as found by Cross et al., (2009) and Li (2007), targets of workplace cyberbullying also reported an enhanced sense of powerlessness and distress if the behaviour was conducted anonymously, in this case by anonymous public servants and/or external clients/customers (Kowalski et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010).

Task-related cyberbullying

Internally-based task-related cyberbullying: This form of online bullying was perceived by participants as originating from a number of defined sources such as public sector supervisors/bosses, colleagues, staff/direct reports, teams and groups. For example, an extract from Study 2, survey respondent #1_105 reported a form of task-based cyberbullying as originating from a direct supervisor, "I have had situations where my senior manager has castigated me for not "following the correct channels" i.e., delegations in emails." The detrimental effect of this task-related cyberbullying on targets, particularly those who are in an organisationally subordinate position to the cyberbully, is further highlighted by survey respondent #1_217 who wrote, "Repeated emails criticising me both professionally and

personally and my decision-making by one of the senior members of the team I supervise and copying it in to my supervisor and subordinates." Equally detrimental are unsolicited work performance task-related criticisms from work colleagues and peers, as indicated by survey respondent #1_168 who wrote:

> *Gossiping about work colleagues on work email and then having someone forward on the email chain to that individual. Sending inappropriate emails to work colleagues (in and out of work hours) that criticise their work performance/decisions they have made, their personal lives or their looks.*

Social isolation and internally-sourced task-based cyberbullying by colleagues and group members is discussed by survey respondent #1_386 who said, "… got it into their heads that I should be doing some part of their job as part of my job. There were a series of e-mails from various members to me along the same lines, so obviously they had been discussing this amongst the group."

Externally-sourced task-based workplace cyberbullying: This form of online bullying was described by survey respondent 1_412 who said: "Angry emails from members of the public who are frustrated with service or perceptions of service failures and who are sometimes mentally unwell." Public servants perceived this form as more demanding due to the potential reputational damage on the official and government agency and the challenges in averting and counteracting the behaviour. In the case illustrated by interviewee #20, two counteracting measures were implemented – blocking the external cyberbully and requesting police assistance:

> *…[Another example was during] Twitter Cabinet; there was an example of cyberbullying where some Tweets that [were] initiated by "xxx" [and] were threatening the Ministers and we had to get the police involved to look into it. We were also able to block the Tweeter.*

Person-related workplace cyberbullying

According to traditional face-to-face organisational bullying research, social conflict may arise if an individual's personal values or belief system significantly differs from the organisation's culture or accepted group behaviours, thereby increasing the chances of victimisation and exclusion (Leymann, 1996). In a similar manner, person-related workplace cyberbullying communications are reported by public servants as originating from both internal (other government employees) and external (non-government employees) perpetrators. That is, workplace cyberbullying

perpetrators can be either other public servants within their agency, or from other public sector agencies, or from non-government organisations, clients and customers including members of the Australian public. While this finding has been alluded to within various government reports together with some initial employment resolution policies (APSC, 2013c, 2014b), this is the first empirically-based research to find that public servants experience both internal and external person-related workplace cyberbullying, and from across all workplace cyber technologies including email.

Evidence of internally-sourced person-related workplace cyberbullying was sourced from both Study 1's interviewees and Study 2's survey respondents. Research into traditional forms of face-to-face workplace bullying (Crawford, 2001; Einarsen et al., 2011) indicates person-related bullying is often harder to quantify and resolve as the interpretation of the behaviour tends to rely on the subjective perceptions of the target and perpetrator (Salin, 2001). However, Phase 1 found that targets found it easier to prove workplace cyberbullying, given it was generally text-based. In this regard, issues tended to arise when conflict resolution processes were attempted in cases where the perpetrators were anonymous (Smith et al., 2003), or in cases involving non-government clients and customers not bound by code of conduct enshrined in the *Public Sector Act 1999.* In these cases, given cyber technologies' capacity to mass broadcast, employees generally reported a heightened stress levels arising from the public humiliation and defamation as illustrated by interviewee #13 who said, "Possibly because people take work emails very personally. I think that's typical of all bullying and harassment matters…"

Survey respondents reported that internally-sourced person-related cyberbullying also arose from supervisors, colleagues or peers located within the target's team or group. This point is illustrated by survey respondent 1_389 who wrote, "Receiving an initial very long e-mail in capital letters directly attacking myself and actions and decisions I had made, cc'd to a large group of peers." Further evidence regarding peer-to-peer internal person-related workplace cyberbullying is provided by survey respondents 1_393 and 1_149. These respondents wrote respectively, "Within a team, sending each other emails discussing a colleague behind their back" and "blind copying individuals into work emails that have content which may be of a personal nature to the person it is addressed to, e.g., BCC copying a colleague into a disciplinary email to another staff member when really it has

nothing to do to with the person." Interviewee #12 talked about person-related workplace cyberbullying events arising from internal senior officials, such as managers and members of the executive, and the implicit injustice of receiving negative emails outside work hours:

> *I was cyberbullied in this public service, by a very, very senior person. I'd be getting emails every Sunday evening. Just ripping strips off me. so I can't sleep, right, the whole night I don't sleep.*

Person-related workplace cyberbullying manifesting from senior public servants is also raised by Study 2 and illustrated by survey respondent 1_281, who wrote, "Text messages from senior staff that attack you personally, for example "What were you thinking? I couldn't have made myself plainer - talking to you is like talking to a moron." Government employees also perceive the growth of cross-agency and whole-of-service workplace cyberbullying behaviour. Evidence of externally-sourced person-related workplace cyberbullying was illustrated by interviewee #20 who discussed an event from external perpetrators:

> *...[for example] personal abuse that is directed at officials on Twitter. [Name removed] has received hundreds of Twitter comments that were abusive and bullying.*

Intent and intensity

In line with the Literature Review, empirical evidence from this research confirmed that the detached nature of online communication does indeed enhance the potential for the accidental misinterpretation of cyber messages (particularly text-based cyber communications), that quickly intensify into cyberbullying (Giumetti et al., 2012; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Smith et al., 2006). Indeed, the detached nature of virtual cyber communications can cause perpetrators to disengage from otherwise "normal" empathetic responses (Suler, 2004), and, in high pressured organisational environments, has the potential to create online psychopathic behaviour. Furthermore, and in line with SIP theory (Walther, 1992, 1996), text-based cyber technology's inability to convey verbal and non-verbal conversational social cues, such as tone and inflection. In line with the disinhibition theory (Kiesler, 1986; Suler, 2004), the employees then emotionally detach and lose empathy with the target (Slonje & Smith, 2008). Consequently, the concept of "intent" within this phenomenon describes either:

- the perpetrator's conscious and malicious intention to cause harm or distress (Besley, 2009; Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006) and may include anonymous forms of cyberbullying, or
- miscommunications occurring as a result text-based workplace cyber messages sent without the explanatory non-verbal social prompts within the context of an aggressive and stressful organisational culture (Walther et al., 2005).

The combination of intent and intensity in workplace cyberbullying is developed as a consequence of the reputational and career damaging consequences on the employee being targeted. In this regard, cyberbullying is generally felt more intensely than traditional workplace face-to-face bullying and harassment. Literature does indicate, however, that workplace cyberbullying potentially offers greater consequences for workplace employees as one online bullying message or post can be mass broadcast once and re-read ad infinitum, thereby intensifying the target's embarrassment and distress (Cross et al., 2009; Li, 2007). Additionally, general miscommunications (Giumetti et al., 2012; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Smith et al., 2008) can quickly escalate and intensify, particularly given cyber technology's capacity for instantaneous workplace feedback (Grigg, 2010). Internal workplace cyberbullying perpetrators have the option to either anonymously or openly harass the employee (Kowalski et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010). That workplace cyberbullying can occur at anonymously, anytime and anywhere, has the potential to seriously intensify the cyberbullying and impact a target's work/life balance and emotional/physical welfare (Sproull, 1994).

Accidental intent | Intensity

Walther's (1992, 1994) SIP theory posited the notion that the absence of social cues (tone and inflection) across professionally-based CMC may cause miscommunications. This notion was further contextualised within the idea that, in general, workplace CMC users tend to interpret text-based cyber messages within the context of accepted organisational behaviours and culture (Walther et al., 2005). Misinterpretations of online workplace communications, particularly in high pressure work environments, can escalate and intensify into cyberbullying (Giumetti et al., 2012; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Smith et al., 2008).

This form of accidental cyberbullying is more likely to occur as a result of poor online (and offline) communication skills (Jordan & Sheehan, 2000; Moayed et al., 2006), management inexperience (Grigg, 2010), and technological ineptitude, to name a few. This point, that intense forms of cyberbullying can accidentally occur as a consequence of a hasty response to a potentially blunt or ill-considered work email by a harassed public servant, is highlighted by interviewee #22, who said,

> *…it's [cyber communication] quick and you can vent without realising the consequences on the readers or recipients. If you're not happy with a decision you can voice it, at that person, straight away, without calming down.*

The two qualitative studies conducted in Phase 1 highlighted a broad combination of features perceived by public sector employees as contributing factors leading to workplace cyberbullying arising from miscommunications caused by:

- poor writing and comprehension skills,
- the immediacy of the cyber technology allowing participants to provide instantaneous feedback,
- managerial inexperience and/or lack of training,
- misunderstood communication requirements for introverts and extroverts, and
- outpaced or misaligned staff management policies and procedures with the lived workplace behaviours (Robbins et al., 2004; Sendjaya et al., 2008).

In line with SIP theory (Walther, 1992, 1996; Walther et al., 2005) accidental miscommunication arising from misinterpreting text-based online workplace communications and is discussed by survey respondent #1_234 who wrote,

> *Always dealing with someone by email or text rather than having telephone or face-to-face conversations with them so that all communication is in a discoverable written format which is open to misinterpretation…*

Following on from the notion of miscommunications arising from accidental misinterpretation of text-based online workplace communications (Walther, 1996; Walther et al., 2005), interviewee #5 talked about the importance of public sector education aimed at developing online communication skills for employees:

> *So all I now need to think about is a [single] sentence to convey my intent, it's even harder to write something short than it is to write it long, that we think people are skilled enough to write 140 characters to get across with clarify the intent and mindset without ambiguity to a broader audience?*

In line with public servants' perceptions that misinterpreted text-based online workplace communications can quickly escalate into cyberbullying events, interviewee #5 also discussed the importance of developing high quality messages for conveyance across all official public sector online communication, including social media and emails.

> *... all of these social media or communication technologies are similar and once the message is gone, it's gone. I might sit down and re-write an email five or six times if it's important to me … before I was sure the intent was right and I'd asked all the right questions and I'd communicated all the right messages. That underlying intent and skill is still necessary to make use of these [cyber] tools.*

Poorly managed performance management or task-setting online communications conducted by inexperienced or inept supervisors were also seen as trigger points that escalated into workplace cyberbullying. In this regard, survey respondent #1_202 wrote that performance management processes that were conducted via email and initiated by supervisors or management were often misinterpreted by staff. In line with SIP theory (Walther 1994; Walther et al., 2005), this misinterpretation resulted due to a lack of tone and inflection in the email, which is misread by the recipient. In this regard, survey respondent #1_202 wrote, "When the staff member provided the work the line manager asked for, they were told it was not up to standard and/or was not what they wanted. This detail was also advised via email." Survey respondent 1_212 stated,

> *I have had a colleague approach me to advise that, even though their line manager was sitting directly beside them, all was provided to them via email. When the staff member asked their line manager to provide additional support or take the time to explain the request in more detail, the line manager would always claim to be too busy.*

Malicious intent | Intensity

In line with workplace bullying literature, empirical evidence from this research found a relationship between the following elements of workplace cyberbullying:

a) frequency and/or number of the bullying episodes over time, together with

b) the personal or impersonal nature of the event, combined with (Person-related workplace cyberbullying is discussed in the subsection above),

c) the intensity of the behaviours (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen et al., 2010).

Public servants perceive online bullying as generally "worse" and thus more intense than face-to-face bullying events. This point is substantiated by the Literature Review, whereby the intent and heightened ferocity (intensity) of workplace cyber communications bullying arise as consequence of:

- The perpetrator's conscious intention to cause harm or distress to an individual target (Besley, 2009; Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006), using some form of power imbalance, or
- The combination of professional online communication without the moderation effect of non-verbal inflections together with organisationally accepted aggressive interpersonal behaviours (Walther et al., 2005) and cyber technologies' instantaneous feedback capability may result in miscommunications and precipitous responses that quickly escalate (Grigg, 2010).

This last point was illustrated by interviewee #7 who said:

> *...my team have been talking about cyberbullying. I think it's worse than face-to-face because people carry their phones in their pockets, now with the smart phones you get updated on everything that's happening and it's so invasive on your life, so we're really lucky that there haven't been any really serious consequences....*

Study 2's survey respondents attribute malicious intent when the perpetrators is clearly targeting specific recipient or group, as illustrated by survey respondent 1_96 wrote:

Emails that are unreasonably critical of performance or accusatory in language. Failing to acknowledge receipt of emails which request an acknowledgement or response.

Power

In line with traditional face-to-face workplace bullying, overt and covert workplace cyberbullying derived from the perpetrator's misuse of organisational power or personal influence in the group or team. However, workplace cyberbullying perpetrators could also hide their identity and remain anonymous and thus hold power over the target:

- Overt, explicit, highly direct and recognisable forms such as verbal or physical attacks, or
- Covert, implicit, indirect and ambiguous through gossiping, exclusion or isolation (Olweus, 1993); and

  Anonymity creates power imbalances (Coyne et al., In press), where the user uses technology to hide their identity under a cloud of technological invisibility (Kowalski et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010) and escape censure or punishment (Willard, 2007).

Overt power

Empirical evidence from the qualitative studies found the overt forms of power-based bullying behaviours. This is indicated by survey respondent #1_204 who wrote about external sources of overt cyberbullying: "When I was working in the fraud team I was directly impacted by a customer cyber-bullying me." Similar to traditional face-to-face workplace bullying, supervisors continued to hold substantial power over subordinate targets, and used cyber technologies to intensify bullying. For example, the supervisor could monitor the target's work for errors, bypass them for work opportunities or direct the target to complete work that exceeded their capabilities thereby setting the target up to fail (Salin, 2001). Survey Respondent #1_96 lists a range of overt cyberbullying representing power imbalance due to positional power:

Placing of employee accounts into misconduct/suspended status which is publicly accessible to all staff via a directory search ahead of an investigation into workplace misconduct. Shutting down workplace forums

or information exchange services because of an alternative view of a subject. ... Removal of/reduction in employees access to technology, particularly in relation to obligations of that employee to complete electronic documents/respond to emails.….

Covert power

Power imbalances are a consistent feature defining face-to-face workplace bullying, particularly in covert cases. In these cases targets report feeling themselves powerless to defend themselves against their supervisors or managers, and struggle to provide evidence of the behaviour to mediators (Einarsen et al., 2011; Lutgen-Sandvick & Tracey, 2012). This ambiguity also holds true for some workplace cyberbullying events. While workplace cyberbullying events are generally considered easier to prove, given it generates some form of written or pictorial evidence, public servants found the behaviour could be open to interpretation, as observed by interviewee #12 who said:

I think cyberbullying is more subtle with adults, sometimes…

Internal sources of covert cyberbullying also arising from co-workers, rather than supervisors, was raised by survey respondent #1_290, who wrote: "Gossiping on private instant messenger chat networks. Whilst the recipient of the bullying behaviour is unaware of what is going on, there is still damage being done to their reputation." The impact of co-worker cyberbullying is potentially greater than that of traditional face-to-face bullying as more people are involved – across teams, sections and agencies. Co-worker cyberbullying, intimidation and coercion of junior staff was also perceived by participants as arising from across the agency and include a number of senior officers usually on matters relating to important decisions. This behaviour was perceived as placing the employee under great stress to comply with their superior or lose their job. These points are explained by survey respondent #1_46 who wrote:

… I have seen many people write hostile and/or demanding emails where they will include their manager, your manager, and possibly those managers' managers as well as a range of other in order to bully you into taking a particular course of action.

In line with traditional face-to-face workplace bullying, targets of workplace cyberbullying may also be lulled into a false sense of security if a supervisor initiates

a work-relationship along a sense of mutual equality that, over time, the target later finds was used against them (Einarsen et al., 2003; Zapf & Gross, 2001). This example of cover power is reflected by survey respondent #1_292:

The key thing that makes this a subtle bullying behaviour is that the recipient is unaware of what is going on, and generally only becomes aware if they somehow receive information when applying for a promotion or when their performance is being assessed, which alerts them to the negative opinions about them that are being spread around the workplace.

Anonymous power and the threat of immediate, mass publicity

Perpetrators of workplace cyberbullying also use technology to hide their online identify while bullying their target. This behaviour is described by interviewee #11 who said, "Because if you can't identify the perpetrator then you can't make a formal complaint, so…" Some research attributes this behaviour to the detached nature of technology, enabling individuals to emotionally disengage from their actions (Suler, 2004). The disinhibition theory asserts that perpetrators who hide their identity behind technology feel invisible (Kowalski et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010), and more powerful than their targets. Online anonymity allows perpetrators to say whatever they want and, in general terms, avoid censure or punishment (Willard, 2007). Research conducted across 331 UK university employees by Coyne et al., (In Press), found that a perpetrator's ability to remain anonymous created a new power imbalance as the target finds it difficult to protect themselves against an unknown adversary. This as indicated by number 1_99, "Frontline staff are having their work performance publicised on YouTube by disgruntled clients (public) who are unhappy with the longer waiting queues at Centrelink and Medicare."

Clearly, online workplace bullying is not always anonymous (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013), however, when it is anonymous, the outcomes are perceived as intense (Giumetti et al., 2012; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Smith et al., 2006). In line with SIP theory (Walther, 1992, 1996) the absence of verbal and non-verbal social cues in text-based workplace cyber communications (Walther, 2011) has been found to create miscommunications that can escalate into cyberbullying. Professional workplace CMCs are less likely to include emoticons, such as smiley faces, to represent people's feelings. The sometimes negative impact of the absence of

conversational tone and inflection able to be conveyed across professional text-based cyber messages is described by interviewee #13:

> *.. the tone of the email is difficult to grasp, people might say something in email that may come across wrong when they didn't mean it that way. It's devoid of tone and inflection and people read tone and inflection into it and respond in kind, and it then escalates. Miscommunication… I think the scope for it is greater in emails, for misinterpretation, and feeling that you're being harassed or bullied, is greater in email….you can perceive yourself as being attacked through email that you might not come across elsewhere..*

Repetitiveness and immediate, mass publicity

According to traditional bullying literature, research found that a combination of repetitiveness, period of exposure to the bullying, and the perpetrator's intent are crucial elements in understanding the impact on targets (Crawford, 2001). The notion of repetitiveness in workplace cyberbullying reflects the perpetrator's ability to use technology to mass broadcast one post, comment or photo/video organisational and public domains (Besley, 2009; Sproull, 1994) to humiliate, embarrass or defame the target/s (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Kowalski et al., 2008; Li, 2007). Indeed many researchers include this definition of "repetitiveness" when describing workplace cyberbullying (Besley, 2009; Li, 2007; Smith et al., 2008).

As indicated in the subsection entitled covert power, the perpetrator' ability to use technology to publically mass broadcast across team and agency boundaries and into the public domain is a new form of power. It can be used overtly, when perpetrators' share their identity with their target, or covertly/anonymously. Cyber technology's mass broadcast capability is a new form of power that has been newly identified within this research into workplace cyberbullying in the Australian public sector. Furthermore, and as discussed above, the term "repetitiveness" takes on new meaning in workplace cyberbullying as one post, photo or video can be read and re-read, promulgated and re-promulgated. The quotes below illustrates public servants using cyber technology to mass broadcast negative comments about a co-worker, and bypass any organisational containment controls (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Kowalski et al., 2008; Li, 2007). Survey respondent #99 wrote, "Private Facebooking involving work colleagues and knowledge which is gained through work, but broadcasted publicly. ignoring online approaches, made to another - particularly a supervisor."

Interviewee #14 stated, "…where they removed negative comments on a YourSay forum. And of course the people who had made those comments...reported it on other places...." This point is demonstrated by interviewee #7 who stated:

> *And given the nature of the [cyber] platform, it also was accessible to broader audience including members of the community who were not eligible for this particular payment [who] saw this advertisement and got upset because they thought they were being excluded. As a consequence the [clients'] comments started to get quite direct between people who were eligible and people who were not.*

Transitioning: face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying

This research did not determine whether traditional face-to-face workplace bullies and targets switched roles when using cyber technologies (i.e., where the face-to-face bully is subsequently cyberbullied by the target) or whether both aggressors and targets manifested into cyberbullies as suggested by some schoolyard and youth studies (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2007). However, this research did substantiate existing literature's claims that offline schoolyard bullies and targets can transition into similar online roles (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). In this regard, Respondent #1_320 and interviewee #24 illustrated how face-to-face bullying transitioned into cyberbullying, and where cyberbullying transitioned into face-to-face bullying:

Respondent #1_320: "Controlling, shout (abuse) at a person in front of others and replicating this in [email] correspondence." and Respondent #1_49 who wrote: "Cyber bullying is very common in the workplace. Anyone who would usually "bully" usually finds a way to target someone using social media or other technologies."

7.5.4 Concluding statement | Hypothesis 1

In conclusion, empirical evidence arising from this research indicates that it is probable Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local public sector employees experience workplace cyberbullying in their departments and agencies. Furthermore, and in response to Hypothesis 1, two types of workplace cyberbullying are observed or experienced by public servants, and include a number of elements. The two types of workplace cyberbullying comprised:

- Task-related, where supervisors, colleagues, peers, staff, external clients and individuals use the available workplace cyber technologies to individually, as a team/group, or mass broadcast an attack on the target with a view to undermining or damaging their professional reputation (Coyne et al., In press; Einarsen et al., 2009).
- Person-related, where supervisors, colleagues, peers, staff, external clients and/or individuals use the available workplace cyber technologies to individually, as a team/group or mass broadcast an attack on the target's personality, character, gender, religion, health, background with a view to demoralise and destabilise the target (Coyne et al., In press; Einarsen et al., 2009).

- Cyberbullying is perceived as manifesting with the following elements:
  - Power imbalances: overt including mass broadcasting, covert including anonymity and public, mass broadcasting,
  - Intent – accidental and malicious/deliberate,
  - Intensity – aggressive culture plus the detached nature of cyber technology leads to an increased disinhibition effect, and
  - Repetitiveness – also known as public, mass broadcasting
- Cyberbullying is also perceived as often relentless and inescapable (even for employees changing jobs), and cross-pollinating, or transitioning, between offline and online, work and private environments in a "boundaryless" manner (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013). This cross-pollination increases the potential for escalated forms of work-related online aggression that can "infect" an employees' work and private lives.

7.6 RQ 2 | CONSEQUENCES

Section 7.5 above pertained to Hypothesis 1 and RQ1, that is, how do Australian public sector employees perceive cyberbullying as manifesting within Australian public sector work environments? Section 7.6 regards the four hypotheses relating to RQ2: How do Australian public sector employees perceive workplace cyberbullying as affecting their workplace stress, job satisfaction, work performance, and organisational culture? Thus, these sections relate to Australian public servants' perceptions as to the effect of workplace cyberbullying. Given Phase 2's empirical

evidence, Hypothesis 2 (work stress) and 3 (job performance) will be discussed together, followed separately by Hypothesis 4 (job satisfaction) and 5 (culture).

7.6.1 Hypotheses 2 and 3

Workplace cyberbullying levels are perceived by employees as positively correlated with increased levels of workplace stress.

Workplace cyberbullying levels are perceived by employees as negatively correlated with overall work performance.

7.6.2 Quantitative evidence

Empirical evidence from Study 3 (Chapter 6) substantiated hypotheses 2 and 3. The online survey pertaining to workplace stress and work performance related to two single-item scales (Cunny & Perri, 1991; Loo, 2002) that asked public servants to self-rank (Akinbowale et al., 2014) their perceptions as to the impact of workplace cyberbullying on workplace stress levels (Cunny & Perri, 1991), and job performance (Akinbowale et al., 2014). Workplace cyberbullying research has found that online communication and behaviour is perceived more intensely by workers given cyber technologies' capability to promulgate posts, comments and images/videos ad infinitum, with potentially immediate consequences on employees' reputation and career prospects (Cross et al., 2009; Grigg, 2010; Li, 2007). Results from the histograms and Spearman's rank non-parametric correlation coefficients respectively found that, over the past six months, three quarters of participants (74.5%) perceived workplace cyberbullying as positively correlated to employees' perceptions of workplace stress (ρ = +.524 and +.448, $p < .001$). Nearly half (43.8%) viewed the phenomenon as negatively correlated to work performance (ρ = -.701 and - .621, $p < .001$). These statistically significant results indicate that public sector employees perceived workplace cyberbullying as increasing their workplace stress levels and decreasing their work performance. This statistical evidence is strengthened by the qualitative data below.

7.6.3 Qualitative evidence

Qualitative evidence from Studies 1 and 2 (Chapters 4 and 5) substantiated hypotheses 2 and 3. This research found similar results to findings identified by Giumetti et al. (2012). Giumetti's study found that ongoing and aggressive offline

(face-to-face) workplace bullying contributed to employees' experiencing heightened stress and anxiety, lowered self-confidence and depression, leading to decreased job performance. Empirical evidence from this research also relates to research conducted by Kern and Grandey (2009), who found that employees "experiencing frequent incivility from customers is a noted social stressor linked with job burnout" (p. 46). Furthermore, the World Health Organisation (Australian Productivity Commission, 2010) identified work-related stress, psychological injury and fatigue as contributing factors of traditional face-to-face workplace bullying. International research into workplace bullying found that employees suffering deteriorating psychological and physical health can lead to underperformance at work (Tuckey et al., 2009).

Work stress and performance: Aggressive environment and longevity of workplace cyberbullying events

Empirical evidence from this research confirms that employees suffering stress symptoms from workplace cyberbullying experience varying degrees of decreased work performance. In this regard, survey respondent 1_170 wrote: "Sending an unwarranted amount of "badgering" emails/texts to an individual - these emails have content which is above board but are designed to corrode the other individuals self-worth and degrade their performance in the long term perhaps in the hope they will find work somewhere else."

Study participants also reported feeling stressed from working in unremittingly aggressive environments (Cunny & Perri, 1991). International medical research found employees with ongoing stress experience high cortisol levels which may result in physical symptoms such as elevated blood pressure and cholesterol, lowered immunity and inflammatory responses (Akinbowale et al., 2014; Bellelli et al., 2002; Walkdstein & Katzel, 2005). This research also found that participants with high levels of the cortisol hormone suffered impaired cognitive capabilities that could be detrimental to job effectiveness and lower performance at work. Heightened stress resulting from months of anonymous web-based cyberbullying, and leading to workplace underperformance, is raised by interviewee #13 who said:

> *Having to get psychological assistance from the Employment Assistance Program, self-harm thoughts, depression, your health breaking down and being hospitalised like I was [two months in hospital with pneumonia] and*

even if the person [target] doesn't end up taking time off work, their behaviour at work is certainly affected even visibly distressed or retreating from the people around them and low performance are all on the other extreme; heightened agitation, distressed, lack of ability to display judgement… inside having this feeling that it gnawing away at you inside that it was so unfair and so unjustified and feeling absolutely powerless to do anything about it...

Employees experiencing stress and performance degradation as a result of workplace cyberbullying manifest conceptually similar outcomes to traditional workplace bullying. However, empirical evidence found in this research shows that the cumulative effects of cyberbullying, its anonymity and ability to affect targets at work and at home at any time, are potentially more intense. The unremitting nature of workplace cyberbullying has the potential to quickly escalate target's stress levels, and any associated health consequences.

Employee stress and work performance: Cyber fatigue

Lowry and Moskos (2005) found that employees who feel they are constantly connected to work via cyber technology may experience online work fatigue. This was due to employees feeling unable to disengage from work matters during what had traditional been considered "off work" periods, such as during family and holiday periods. Feelings of being constantly "accessible and online" contributed to employees' stress, fatigue and irritability (Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005). This issue is raised by survey respondent #1_265 who wrote, "After hour telephone calls between my director and a "gossip" in our team. So childish, but also so damaging to morale and productivity."

Employee stress and work performance: Inadequate workplace protection measures

According to Weatherbee and Kelloway (2006), workplace intervention strategies developed to mitigate or prevent workplace cyberbullying provide various resolution strategies. These include technical solutions (e.g., ICT policies etc.), staff management processes (e.g., codes of conduct etc.), and legal and social resolution strategies (e.g., natural justice legal provision where all parties have a voice).Mitigating and preventing cyberbullying from public sector co-*workers*: Public servants' work and private online behaviour are mandated through the

respective public sector's public service legislation such as the *Commonwealth's Public Service Act 1999*.

This law firstly, articulates employees' work code of conduct, secondly, restricts private online criticisms of government policy, and thirdly, protects employees from abuse and harassment from other employees. Employees in breach of these dictates may be dismissed irrespective of any infringements to their own personal privacy (APSC, 2013c; Taylor, 2013).

Mitigating and preventing cyberbullying from public sector co-workers and non-government clients and customers: Other legislative frameworks offering public servants avenues by which to resolve aggressive workplace behaviour arising from external non-government clients and customers, not bound by the public sector's respective codes of conduct, are various. For example, the *Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act 2011* harmonisation laws allow for aggressive and bullying internal and external workplace behaviours to be dealt with as a health and safety issue. Affected employees may raise psychological injury claims regarding workplace bullying from co-workers or external clients (Comcare, 2014b). This legislation currently does not identify the separate risks associated with offline (face-to-face bullying) and online bullying (cyberbullying). Similarly, the *Fair Work Amendment Act 2013*, which defines workplace bullying as repeated unreasonable behaviour that creates a risk to health and safety, does not provide for separate offline and online bullying risks.

Interviewee #8 highlighted the potential seriousness of professional cyber-defamation and how this issues is now a very real element for any public servant working with disgruntled internal or external clients, including staff who vilifies the target through social media. This quote highlights the challenges public servants face when attempting to protect themselves and resolve the workplace cyberbullying using existing legislation:

> *I guess one part of the problem is a bit beyond bullying and that's the difficulty for the government to take action when a public servant has been defamed. Generally speaking it's not a matter for the government to take public action on behalf of a public servant, as in the website case and other online cases where a public servant has been defamed…The Australian Government's policy is that we do not commence defamation proceedings for [public service] employees because it's a private action, you get the*

money yourself [as a private citizen], and if you feel you've been defamed feel free to go and see a lawyer yourself. There have been several instances where this has arisen on context to this government and we've had to sit back and say, ok, we cannot represent these employees for defamation action, so what can we do to get this [cyberbullying] notice board taken down?

7.6.4 Concluding Statement | Hypotheses 2 & 3

Empirical evidence found that workplace cyberbullying is positively correlated to workplace stress and negatively correlated to overall work performance. In this regard, government employees perceive workplace cyberbullying as enhancing their workplace stress levels and decreasing their work performance. This degradation of individual performance has implications for employers and organisational performance (AHRC, 2013; Martin et al., 2001) and an employer's duty of care to provide a safe working environment free from harassment and bullying (West et al., 2014). A number of stress factors were noted, all of which decreased an individual's work performance to varying degrees:

- the degree and longevity of accepted inter-personal workplace aggression was a factor identified by participants in heightened stress, lower self-worth, health and work performance,
- ongoing cyberbullying events were perceived by participants as resulting in extreme levels of stress and decreased health,
- cyber fatigue, where employees felt constantly connected to work at all times of the day or night, was felt by participants as a stress factor that over time resulted in decreased work performance, and
- lack of robust employment protections firstly undermined employees' trust in organisational workplace bullying protection and mitigation frameworks, and secondly did little to mitigate employees' reputational damage resulting from anonymous, mass broadcast cyber allegations made by internal co-workers or external clients and customers.

7.6.5 Hypothesis 4

Workplace cyberbullying levels are perceived by employees as negatively correlated with feelings of job satisfaction.

7.6.6 Quantitative evidence

Study 3's (Chapter 6) empirical evidence substantiated Hypothesis 4. In this regard, a single-item scale asked public servants to self-rank (Akinbowale et al., 2014) their perceptions of workplace cyberbullying within the context of job satisfaction (Nagy, 2002). In previous research, online incivility, aggression and bullying communication behaviours have linked employees' perceptions of negative workplace events on job satisfaction (Coyne et al., In press; Lim et al., 2008; Lim & Teo, 2009). Results from the histogram and Spearman's rank non-parametric correlation coefficient respectively found that, over the past six months, third of participants (34.3%) perceived workplace cyberbullying as negatively correlated with job satisfaction (ρ = -.545 and -.483, $p < .001$). While these correlation coefficients demonstrated significantly large effects at +/- 5, and were statistically significant at $p < .001$ (Zaiontz, 2014c), it is worth mentioning that over half (52.5%) were satisfied or very satisfied with their jobs. However, it is also useful to recall that 13.2% of respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their jobs and for many reasons perhaps felt somewhat ambiguous about their job satisfaction levels. These statistical findings are clarified by the qualitative findings arising from Phase 2's studies.

7.6.7 Qualitative evidence

Qualitative evidence from Studies 1 and 2 (Chapters 4 and 5) substantiated Hypothesis 4. According to the Literature Review, substantial evidence regarding the consequences of traditional face-to-face bullying was found within team or group-based contexts, all of which allude to decreased job satisfaction levels (Giumetti et al., 2012). These consequences include increased levels of frustration, anger, modelled incivility behaviours (Anderson & Pearson, 1999; Leymann, 1996; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998; Vardi & Wiener, 1996), decreased capacity for clear task management or decision making (Martin, Hiesel, & Valencic, 2001), and increased employee absenteeism and attrition (Giumetti et al., 2012). Exposure to traditional forms of face-to-face bullying behaviour can also cause targets to feel

depressed and anxious (Björkqvist, 2001; Frone, 2000; Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001; Monks et al., 2009; Zapf & Gross, 2001).

Job satisfaction: Immediate feedback capability

Empirical evidence from Study 1 displays the potential impact on job satisfaction arising from cyber communications capacity to instantaneously disseminate sometime thoughtless feedback (Grigg, 2010). In this regard, interviewee #13 talked about the impact of anonymous and unremitting workplace cyberbullying on her perceptions regarding job satisfaction:

> *And while I was running around, because there were other people named on this [anonymous, cyberbullying] website, so I was running around keeping them propped up and checking in with them and making sure they were ok and debriefing them, you know I was told I just needed a standard response when people started talking to me about it. And I was thinking 'How about me?*

interviewee #4 also discussed the impact on the team's resilience and job satisfaction as a consequence of cyberbullying from email:

> *Well, once it's in written form its official. This happens quite regularly with us....What is more problematic is when the shot across the boughs is an accurate reflection and couched in insulting and abusive language but factually accurate. It becomes quite unhelpful when the comments become personal and they do get quite personal. For the team members who are dealing with it are dealing with it in a customer focused way. It's exhausting and demanding, and it is crushing of one's soul and there's only so much capacity building and resilience training one can do with people who are trying to work and deal with situations that are constantly dealing with this type of thing.*

Job satisfaction: Clarity of job role, job responsibilities and duty of care

The changing work environment also represents a new era for employers who, under work safety legislation, have a duty of care to provide employees with a safe, harassment and bully free working environment (West et al., 2014; *WHS Act 2011*). In this regard, however, the impact of online harassment and bullying is clearly being felt by frontline staff, particularly those who interact with external clients including members of the Australian public. This point is demonstrated by survey respondent

#1_99, who wrote, "Frontline staff are having their work performance publicised on YouTube by disgruntled clients (members of the Australian public)..." The potential for workplace cyber harassment and cyberbullying to seriously impact employees' job satisfaction is further illustrated by interviewee #16 who also acknowledges that the changed work environment have developed new training requirements to ensure frontline staff are prepared in future for these new work conditions:

> *...some [frontline] staff just can't hack this type of work environment, don't have the right background or ability or training, and have to leave because they take it personally or respond badly and have no resilience and that then has consequences on their long term careers….To go forward I think we need to gear up and develop better tooling, more sophisticated government services supporting the community. This also ensures that our front line staff aren't unnecessarily exposed to bullying or harassment whether that be face-to-face or cyber.*

7.6.8 Concluding Statement | Hypothesis 4

In response to Hypothesis 4, *Workplace cyberbullying levels are negatively correlated with job satisfaction,* and based on the cumulative empirical evidence gathered from Phases 1 and 2, it seems likely Australian public sector employees perceive workplace cyberbullying as decreasing job satisfaction. Two main variables are associated with decreased job satisfaction arising from workplace cyberbullying. First, cyber technologies' capacity for fast feedback, the detached nature of cyber technology lead to disinhibited interactions resulted in escalated and intensified cyber communications (Giumetti et al., 2012; Grigg, 2010; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Smith et al., 2008). Second, the perception that the employees' role increases the potential to be exposed to workplace cyberbullying events (West et al., 2014). In this regard, employees perceived that these require individuals who are sufficiently resilient to cope with this level of stress and pressure.

7.6.9 Hypothesis 5

Workplace cyberbullying levels are negatively correlated with employees' perceptions of organisational cultural efficacy.

7.6.10 Quantitative evidence

Statistical evidence from Study 3 (Chapter 6) substantiated Hypothesis 5. Factor analysis of the modified 30-item OCQ instrument (Muchinsky, 1976) resulted in a valid and reliable one-factor solution that pertained to public sector employees' perceptions as to the efficacy of organisational culture. Specifically, this related to the efficacy of organisational culture (i.e., enlivened through legislation, policies, rules and regulations as demonstrated through governance processes) in intervening, preventing and resolving workplace cyberbullying. Research has found that the efficacy of cultural structures and procedures, rewards and so on are critical in establishing healthy workplace cultures and behaviours (de Jonge et al., 2004).

Results from the histogram and Spearman's rank non-parametric correlation coefficient respectively found that, over the past six months, over half of participants (56.2%) perceived organisational culture (policies and processes) as negatively correlated with workplace cyberbullying. Thus organisational culture was perceived by participants as reasonably inefficacious in intervening, preventing and resolving cyberbullying events (ρ = -.683 and - .581, $p < .001$). This statistically significant negative correlation between workplace cyberbullying and perceptions of organisational culture shows that employees perceive the organisation's explicit culture – legislation, policies and governance processes, as generally ineffective when resolving cyberbullying events in the workplace. This finding is substantiated by Phase 1's empirical evidence.

7.6.11 Qualitative evidence

Efficacy of organisational culture: Outdated governance frameworks

Qualitative evidence from Studies 1 and 2 (Chapters 4 and 5) substantiated Hypothesis 5. According to the Literature Review, workplace culture can be a barrier to resolving workplace bullying. Employees working in organisations characterised by hierarchical structures and management styles may be unaware that their culture is a bullying one (Boucaut, 2003). In large organisations, such as public services, culture is generally expressed through explicit and implicit rules. Boucaut (2001)

found that "Organisations themselves abide by the rules of the society in which they are located and each individual organisation has its own rules." (p. 70). Boucaut (2003), later explains that explicit rules may be articulated via a code of conduct or code ethics enshrined in law (*Fair Work Act 2009; Public Service Act 1999; WHS Act 2011*), and organisationally articulated through policy and rules and regulations that are enacted through governance processes and rules. In making sense of these laws, public sector administrators develop whole-of-service and organisation-specific policies, procedures, frameworks (e.g., governance processes) for employees to follow (APSC, 2013c, 2014b). Within government agencies, these frameworks and procedures are operationalised as governance processes (i.e., the participatory, or exclusionary, processes and actions organisations conduct when making and implementing decisions) (Peters, 2004).

However, workplace legislation and policies that misalign to actual organisational behaviours, or are too ambiguous or obsolete to be relevant and allow unethical and unjust processes and decisions (Wright et al., 2003), create the organisations that are themselves perceived as bullying (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013). Implicit rules are often unspoken and also guide employees' behaviour (Boucaut, 2003). For example, an unspoken and implicit rule could be that "we are proud of our "Can Do" culture, so we put up with workplace bullying behaviour." These implicit values and behaviours can reduce or even undermine the impact of explicit non-bullying legislation and policies.

A new feature not previously observed in existing literature derives from Phase 1's qualitative studies illustrate employees' loss of confidence in the public sector's existing management and ICT frameworks to protect the demarcation line between employees work and home life (APSC, 2013c, 2014b). Studies have found that the increasing usage of fast-paced online technologies are transforming human-to-human communication (Hinduja & Patchin, 2006, 2008; Kowalski et al., 2008; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004), and blurring people's perceptions between the physical or real and virtual worlds (Monks & Coyne, 2011). However, this particularly feature had not previously been observed within the context of organisational cyber behaviour or the Australian public sector. Interviewee #24 reflects on the increasingly weak boundaries between official work and home life:

...the lines are blurred. It's quite easy for members of the public to check out the agency on our website and figure out our email addresses, particularly since this agency is living in such a close work and social environment within Canberra; it's so small that people get to know your name, and once they know your name they can figure out your work email and personal information such as your home address. ..but there's now a real blurring of the lines between your professional accessibility ...People just think you're always accessible 24/7 ... people will recognise you and come up at any time, when you're with your family, and say anything at all.

Interviewee #17 discussed the impact of officials being publically cyberbullied through social media as a consequence of their role or responsibilities:

I've never personally been the subject of being persistently pursued but I've certainly seen some of my colleagues who have…. this does represent a challenge for people moving into senior public servant roles and it requires new sets and resilience as it becomes more a public and American style of service. And social media plugs into that because you're given a name and a face.

Employees also indicated a lack of confidence in the existing governance frameworks, policies and processes (workplace culture) and education/training programs to provide sufficient support and options in resolving cyberbullying events. This finding is aligns with SIP theory (Walther, 1992, 1996, 2009, 2011), which found that peoples' work attitudes and subsequent work-based behaviours are partially pre-determined by an organisation's social contextual expectations - or culture (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). These points are evidenced by interviewee #11 who said:

I don't know whether our existing frameworks [legislative and policy] will support us with cyberbullying or online stalking or harassment behaviours or [are able to] take us, as a public sector into the future. I really don't know, that's the short answer to your question. And there's another side of the coin, regarding whether there's any legal provision that could protect us [as] employees from clients that use [these] online mechanisms. So I don't believe there's anything prescriptive [regulatory] that would protect clients from poor behaviour by public servants that are masking their identity, or the other way around.

Furthermore, staff and managers are perceived as struggling to make sense of the changing work environment. The old frameworks and education programs appear outdated, or ignore the impact of cyberbullying on staff, thus creating an environment characterised by uncertainty, fear and discontent (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011). These points are discussed by interviewee #1 who stated:

> *...team leaders and managers still don't understand their role in terms of bullying and harassment in terms of open door policy and dealing with small issues before they become major complaints and those sorts of things….I think there's a fairly decent legislative framework around what is and isn't acceptable behaviour, including workplace policies and enterprise agreements that include workplace behaviour sections. So there's a lot of legislative framework there that prescribes the behaviours, but I think the issue is that a lot of people don't have a lot of understanding with those sorts of things to being with.*

Clearly, public servants accredit existing anti face-to-face bullying frameworks as being outdated or ambiguous. However, the situation may worsen when outdated frameworks are combined with apathetic management action in resolving workplace cyberbullying events. This combination can be as an active factor in developing an environment that enables workplace cyberbullying (de Jonge et al., 2004; Einarsen et al., 2003). The Literature Review found that individuals who attempt to adhere to the old framework's code of conduct edicts while also challenging the new negative cyberbullying behaviours (Hoel & Salin, 2003; Einarsen et al., 2003) can experience role-based conflict (Einarsen et al., 1994). In this way, employees find themselves in conflict with the authority figures across the organisation. This point is described by respondent 1_110 who wrote,

> *I have had situations where my senior manager has castigated me for not "following the correct channels" i.e., delegations in emails which are circulated to either several other managers, and recently to very senior management. The wording has been such that I am portrayed as a persistent offender, when in fact I have been well within my rights to elevate these issues. At no time have I ever had any direct HR intervention action actioned by my senior managers, which presumably, if my conduct was not in line with proper protocols then I would be formally reprimanded. I have felt this is an attempt by this particular manager to cow me into submission and not*

raise 'uncomfortable' issues. Even when I have gone through the "correct channels" being this particular manager, this resulted in the manager firing off an email to me, copying in umpteen other senior managers, and saying I was "wasting management time."

Indeed, a combination of existing individual and organisational-wide conflict leads to coercive organisational cultures and team/group sub-cultures (de Jonge et al., 2004; Einarsen et al., 2003). These factors, if combined with weak or inexperienced managers, tend to foster sub-cultures that allow bullies to actively isolate individuals. This point is illustrated by interviewee #19:

Cyberbullying – the public service is rife with this type of behaviour. Different people respond to it differently for instance, some don't care at all, others go on stress leave, and others come to us [Human Resources] for assistance in resolving it. Most of it derives from within the public service to each other and underlines the current unofficial accepted behaviours within the public service. I'm not talking about the official policies and legislation or Code of Conduct, which all talk about how we should behave towards each other, but the real, actual behaviours that occur on a daily basis between public servants irrespective of these policies.

Bullying sub-cultures that enable workplace cyberbullying is further demonstrated by survey respondent 1_171 who wrote:

I have seen it where a group of staff (in the same location) have an online conversation where they are talking about one/others in the same site. Although the bulk of the conversation is on-line, they also make comments (verbally) or laugh. This then indicates to those on-site, who are excluded from the conversation that it is happening. If you are the only one not included in this on-line conversation, you not only feel excluded, but also paranoid that the conversation is about you (otherwise why would you not be included?).

Efficacy of organisational culture: Organisation deviance

This research has found that the public sector's culture in the form of legislation, policies and governance frameworks are perceived by employees as involuntarily nurturing workplace cyberbullying. This is in line with past research that found organisations with explicitly expressed codes of conduct (Keashly & Harvey, 2006), that were at variance with employees' actual workplace behaviours

(Robbins & Judge, 2007), created an "organisation-as-bully" paradigm (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013). This phenomenon has also been described as "organisational deviance" (Robinson & Bennet, 1995).

Organisational deviance represents "voluntary behaviour that violates the significant organisational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organisation, its members, or both" (Robinson & Bennet, 1995, p. 556) and includes a concept labelled "personal aggression" involving a pendulum of interpersonal aggression ranging from verbal abuse to physical violence (Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006). Perceptions of what is or is not bullying behaviour tend to be vastly different between those of the target, witness/witnesses or perpetrators (Parzefall & Salin, 2010).

The reasons behind how and why organisations develop negative interpersonal and corporate cultures have recently been the subject of various experimental and observational studies conducted by social psychologists (Robbins et al., 2004). These studies found that employees model their leaders' attitudes and behavioural cues (Leymann, 1996; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998; Vardi & Wiener, 1996). Milgram (1974) explained that accepted organisational social conduct is often inspired and legitimised by organisation's authority figures, or employees who have positional power, longevity or expertise. Lutgen-Sandvick and Tracey (2012) assert that the relationship between the perpetrator and target is heavily influenced by the organisation's ostensive legitimisation of the perpetrator's actions. In this regard the perpetrator's often more senior, hierarchical position is used against the target's generally more junior position to disrepute the bullying claims.

The qualitative evidence analysed from Phase 1 indicates some participants are experiencing or observing forms of organisational deviance, as claimed by interviewee 13 who comments on the widespread vitriolic nature of existing face-to-face bullying:

> *And I think the online or cyber technology hasn't developed this behaviour – it's always been there and it's always been vitriolic, but the cyber technology has just made it more pervasive....It's [online workplace technology] certainly given them [offline bullies] a very convenient tool to bully other people...There would be people who wouldn't be game to engage in that sort of behaviour in a face-to-face context because they're gutless,*

that now have a very convenient way of doing it, but then most bullies are gutless anyway, it's just made it easier for them.

Furthermore, an agency's Human Resource staff management policies and case-management processes may, perhaps involuntarily, victimise the target for expressing dissatisfaction with implicitly endorsed aggressive or negative work behaviours (Einarsen et al., 2011; Liefooghe & Mackenzie-Davey, 2001). In these instances, an organisation-as-bully culture is recognised when employees feel disempowered, humiliated, degraded or exploited by management and the agency's processes (Einarsen et al., 2003; Rayner, 1997). This point is reflected by 1_343 and 1_204. Survey respondent 1_343 wrote; "Bullying is often masked as part of the "performance review" process, which is often removed from bullying definition by policy statements." Survey respondent 1_204 stated, "use them [emails] as evidence that the staff member was not working to level and as a result, the staff member would not receive a pay raise or opportunities to gain experience at a higher classification."

This matter of organisation-as-bully is deeply concerning, particularly in light of recent Federal court matter discussed and circulated by both the media (Taylor, 2013) and the Commonwealth's agency responsible for employment legislation and policy matters (APSC, 2013b, 2013c). In this case, one Commonwealth department used the *Public Service Act 1999* to justify the monitoring and interrogation of an employee's work and private *anonymous* online behaviours to effect a staff dismissal (Taylor, 2013). This dichotomy between the employer's expectations of staff as mandated by law and employees' rights as Australian citizens is a new public sector issue. While the court supported the employer's right to dismiss the employee for breaching legislative and departmental policies, the court did not recognise the employee's right to privacy. This point is illustrated by as illustrated by interviewee #23 who said, "The whole of public service legislative, education & policy framework provides sufficient guidance and support. But they are contradictory where public servants are encouraged to have their private points of view." This ambiguity between government agencies' rights and employees' rights exists is further highlighted by interviewee #12 who stated;

...if you look at the Public Sector Act it will say that you are not authorised to make public statements on behalf of the government.... So given that it's

been important to try to understand the difference between me as a public servant and me as private person...

This organisation-as-bully construct is further emphasised by the apparent confusion regarding employees' rights versus employer's rights as enshrined in law, as demonstrated by interviewee #22 who said;

...what is deemed "official" what is deemed "private" as a public servant? Are you allowed to join this [online] campaign even though it goes against your Department's policy, and you can argue, well it's on my private Facebook page, and they [the Department] can argue, well it's about official Department policy.

Generally, public servants take their legislated responsibilities very seriously indeed and work hard to uphold their service's reputation by adhering to their respective Commonwealth, State or Territory workplace behaviour laws, such as the Commonwealth's Section 13, entitled the Code of Conduct, under the *Public Service Act 1999*. Yet, despite these good intensions it would appear that the public servants who participated in the two qualitative studies are struggling to translate the legislated inconsistencies between their rights as Australian citizens to express their opinions and legislative work behaviours mandating what public servants are allowed to publically say. This struggle is expressed by interviewee #1:

So [the Public Service Commission] will deliver a policy about bullying or cyberbullying for the whole of Service, and Human Services [in each agency] will scratch their head and say "well, that doesn't really work for us in our client base and environment so we'll need to tweak this policy to suit our environment." So everybody gets the same Service-wide "framework" that they then tweak to suit their own needs, like Employment and Workplace Relations. So there'll be slight changes and variations between agencies.

Within this context, employees now perceive official channels (management, Human Resource, etc.) as ineffective in enforcing good organisation cyber behaviour (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011). In these cases an employee who challenges the group's belligerent behaviours may find themselves in conflict with both the group and organisation (Hoel & Salin, 2003; Einarsen et al., 2003).

In such cases, Milgram (1974) asserted that unethical behaviours are implicitly or explicitly condoned by organisational authority figures, such as supervisors and managers. Consequently, unethical organisational attitudes behaviours are more likely to be accepted across the organisation and modelled by staff, particularly if these behaviours are perceived as rewarded. These points are illustrated by survey respondent #1_281 who wrote: "Text messages from senior staff that attack you personally, for example "What were you thinking? I couldn't have made myself plain - talking to you is like talking to a moron," and interviewee #12 who said:

> *I think cyberbullying is more subtle with adults, sometimes... the whole sort of communication [is] around employees to employer, or manager to worker. I mean it's a complex thing to get right because on the one level you've got two people talking to each other, and on another level you've got a representative of the hierarchy of the organisation and carrying policy for that organisation and the worker...*

Researchers have found that the influx of new cyber communications, such as those offered through social media, are blurring traditional hierarchical structures between and within team and group dynamics, resulting in modified organisational and job expectations, while people management techniques are now moving from face-to-face to virtual team-management processes (Coovert & Thompson, 2003). Zapf and Gross (2001) assert that traditional workplace bullying cultures develop when a workplace internal change occurs without being planned and managed, resulting in potential employee conflicts that, if unresolved and uncontrolled, may develop into negative behaviour that targets marginalised individuals or groups. This research suggests the same may apply in terms of workplace cyberbullying in Australian public sector organisations.

As indicated by the State of the Service Report 2012-13 conducted by the Commonwealth public sector management agency (APSC, 2013c), government workplaces are experiencing fast environmental and behavioural changes as a result of the impact of new mobile cyber technologies. It is unknown the extent of training provided by each agency in these new technologies and their risks, nor the changes to existing Enterprise Agreements to balance the new employment expectations that public sector staff be available during out of normal work hours activities.

Indeed, Phase 1's participants reflected on their ambivalence regarding the pros and cons of mobile technology. Mobile work platforms provided employees with a great deal of flexibility and connectivity, yet conversely mobile technology is enabling out-of-hours contact with unhappy clients on matters that once may have been processed by a manager (Lyytinen & Yoo, 2002). This point is highlighted by 1_99 who wrote, "Frontline staff are having their work performance publicised on YouTube by disgruntled clients (public) who are unhappy with the longer waiting queues at Centrelink and Medicare." And reiterated by interviewee #24 who said, "It's quite easy for members of the public to check out the agency on our website and figure out our email addresses..."

This changing work environment appears to have significantly impacted public servants' perceptions about whether their organisations can now protect them from hostile external stakeholders, clients and customers, as indicated by interviewee #24 who said,

> *..20 or so years ago our employment was defined by silent phone numbers and so you felt protected to some degree that your private life and family would be protected from your work life. However this isn't the case anymore because the lines are blurred. It's quite easy for members of the public to check out the agency on our website and figure out our email addresses...*

Efficacy of organisational culture: Cyber mobility

This research identified a new issue which relates to public sector employees dealing with out-of-hours online bullying usually by either internal and/or external government officials or non-government clients. In regards to workplace cyberbullying arising from external sources (e.g., external stakeholders, clients and customers), interviewee #22 said,

> *I don't think the department so much has thought about social media's ability to follow you home, out of work hours, and contact you on your personal Facebook accounts or iPhone, probably because we [the public sector] don't know how to deal with that aspect…*

In regards to workplace cyberbullying arising from internal sources (e.g., other government officials) Seigne et al., (2007) found that perpetrators of face-to-face bullying had developed the learned aggressive response as a consequence of working within particular workplace (Seigne et al., 2007). Individuals are more likely to learn

these behaviours within hierarchically stable, outcomes focused and authoritative male-dominated work environments that instil people with a sense of entitlement relating to their position (Mikkelsen & Einarsen, 2001). This research indicates these learned behaviours are being conveyed across cyber platforms and thus influencing employees' perceptions of job satisfaction, as indicated by respondent numbers 1_20, 1_311, 1_287, and 1_31 who wrote respectively;

- "Sending emails out of hours- 10 pm at night. Always makes you feel that you don't work hard enough."
- "Repeated phone calls when off duty, when the subject matter is not part of the job or not urgent."
- "Using fear of job insecurity to compel addition work to occur outside of work hours through continued requests for action via blackberry." and
- "Gossiping through emails/texts/calls Over persistent and/or demanding emails/texts (sent at random times, e.g., 23pm, 5am, etc.)."

Indeed, the accessibility, range, and instantaneous nature of cyber communications, coupled with the paucity of text-based social prompts may not only enhance the possibility of miscommunications and cyber aggression within the workplace, but may be undermining the traditional hierarchical boundaries (Flynn & Khan, 2003).

For example, interviewee #8 said, "...I've found that the inappropriate use of social media outside of work has involved work matters, such as slagging off your boss on Facebook." While interviewee #7 said, "…my team have been talking about cyberbullying. I think it's worse than face-to-face because people carry their phones in their pockets, now with the smart phones you get updated on everything that's happening and it's so invasive on your life...."

7.6.12 Concluding Statement | Hypothesis 5

In response to the fifth hypothesis, *Workplace cyberbullying levels is negatively correlated with organisational culture*, and based on the cumulative evidence from Phase 1 and Phase 2, this research has demonstrated it likely that public sector employees perceive workplace cyberbullying as negatively impacting their organisation's culture. The public sector's culture, as reflected by the

effectiveness and cohesiveness of existing legislation, policies and practices (conducted as governance processes, such as delegations of authority, committee processes), are perceived by government employees as often ineffective in resolving workplace cyberbullying events. This finding is in line with Zhang and Leidner's (2014) observation, that while "workplace cyberbullying behaviors are not likely to be treated as corporate crimes, they are behaviors that can produce a hostile work climate and while not illegal, may violate organizational norms and policies" (p. 2). Thus, employees perceived existing frameworks as extensive yet generally inefficacious in resolving and mitigating with traditional face-to-face bullying events and vague and inept in light of the issues raised by cyberbullying. Some of these issues included the discord between public servants attempting to resolve the differences between the organisation's explicit behavioural requirements articulated through law and policy, and the actual work behaviours that were often uncivil, hostile, aggressive, and bullying.

Similarly, employees were struggling to work to new mobile and 24/7 work expectations without really understanding either their rights or responsibilities as public servants and as private citizens of Australia. This confusion is only going to worsen.

- Firstly, as more members of the public sector use Facebook or Twitter to share their work experiences with family and friends, the more likely these cyber missives will be reported to their supervisor, and depending on the issue may potentially result in dismissal.
- Secondly, public servants are confused about their mandated duties as government employees to not publically disagree with government policies, while also being aware of their entitlement as Australian citizens to a private online life.
- Thirdly, mobile cyber technology has helped form new work expectations, whereby staff with internet enabled smart devices are increasingly expected to be available to the employer and/or clients any time of the day or night. The result is twofold, where on the one hand targets can feel constantly "plugged in" to work and thus experience cyber fatigue. Additionally, those individuals who receive consistently harassing or

bullying CMCs feel powerless to escape the behaviour, even when they change jobs.

7.7 CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY | SOCIAL INFORMATION PROCESSING THEORY

SIP theory (Walther, 1992, 1996; Walther et al., 2005; Walther, 2011) posited the notion that, given the absence of CMC or online text-based social cues, employees instead use their perceptions of accepted organisational offline and online behaviour to interpret and adopt CMC behaviours. Importantly, this finding paralleled Fulk et al.'s (1987) emphasis on the importance of people's attitudes, job design and work culture, as factors contributing to individuals' perceptions of acceptable and unacceptable organisational social behaviour. Empirical evidence from this research substantiates this notion and indicates the potential efficacy of using SIP theory in mitigating and resolving workplace cyberbullying. In line with SIP, this research found that government employees reported that the lack of social inflection across workplace text-based cyber communications resulting in accidental misinterpretations sometimes leading to cyberbullying. This point is demonstrated by interviewee #9 who said:

> *Most importantly people need to be aware that email is sent without any inflections in your voice or anything like that so you need to be careful about what they type and write in a reflect way. Especially... sms and Facebook. See Facebook you're communicating socially, not using your work identity. And I wouldn't send someone an sms saying "spat!." I guess even simple things like forgetting to email an attachment where people can take offence at the tone of the emails saying "no attachment" thinking that they're being critical when in fact they're actually being factual. … It's complex.*

Crucially, this research extends past previous workplace cyberbullying literature and found that public sector employees' perceptions of acceptable and unacceptable online and offline behaviours are both influenced by both explicit and implicit organisational culture. Explicit culture pertains to whole-of-service legislation, policies, and organisation-specific policies and governance processes including job design. Implicit culture entails actual behaviours that are sanctioned by a team or sub-group; these sanctioned behaviours are usually in conflict in some way with the explicit culture and are usually explained to new employees as "this is the

way we do things around here." This research found that public servants abiding by the explicit cultural codes of conduct and, as required by organisational governance procedures, officially report breaches of the codes of conduct, find themselves ostracised or punished by group members who sanction the implicit behaviours (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen et al., 2010).

Importantly, in line with SIP (Walther, 1992, 1996), this research found that organisations characterised by aggressive, or ambiguous, or unclear, or outdated internal legislation, policies and governance processes (explicit culture), are more likely to demonstrate aggressive and bullying online communication as employees tend to model accepted workplace behaviours (Leymann, 1996; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998; Vardi & Wiener, 1996). In further extending SIP, empirical evidence found that this misalignment between explicit and implicit culture and subsequent work behaviours, generally perceived to have arisen from the fast passed, constantly changing nature of cyber-based work, tends to create confusion around job role and responsibilities (Leymann, 1996). Again, this confusion can create situations where model employees, abiding by explicit cultural guidelines, attempt to stop breaches of the code of conduct and suddenly find themselves at risk of management apathy or disinterest and/or human resources (Rigby, 2002). These employees are often further bullied by their team or expelled from the organisation. This point is substantiated by interviewee #7 who said,

> *I think the Australian Public Service is really trying to find out how this works and we're using each other's' experience and mistakes to learn what to do and what not to do because there's no templates or frameworks available on this yet. There's no guidance to the Public Service on how government should enter into social media platforms and commentary. We [the Department] were told in 2009 to start up a Departmental Twitter account and so we did. We started off by saying "hi, I'm xx and this is what I'm about" and then we had legal knocking on our door saying, "Did you consult with us before you went ahead with this and did you consider the different risks that you've exposed the Department to?"*

These aggressive offline behaviours were observed across all forms of workplace cyber communication technology. This included the older technology such as telephones, email, and sms to the more recent social media platforms. These points are illustrated by interviewee #24 who said,

> *Meanwhile the public's expectations of public officials are changing and I think we need regulations in the workplace to deal with some of the negative outcomes of working in this new space, like induction packages. At the moment induction packages are silent on this matter.*

During periods of intense change or uncertainty, employees are more likely to closely watch and model the behaviour of their organisational leaders (Leymann, 1996; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998; Vardi & Wiener, 1996). Thus, aggressive behaviour demonstrated by these organisational leaders are more likely, in periods of change, to be modelled and endorsed by employees, thereby resulting in more aggressive offline and online behaviours. These elements were highlighted by survey respondent #1_322 wrote:

> *This sort of email has the impact of signalling to a team that the work of that individual is not seen to be important in the eyes of the manager. The fallout of this kind of behaviour is similar to that experience by a staff member who receives a negative email from a manager who copies in work colleagues, albeit this is much more subtle.*

Reiterating these points, survey respondent #1_255 enumerated on how accepted workplace cyberbullying behaviours change employees' personal online behaviour, "From this point on, I adopted the policy of including the Branch Head into any replies I sent to abusive/hostile emails from my director and, yes, eventually he stopped."

Effects arising from new cyber technologies continues to create debate about the need to forge new theoretical frameworks to explain online human communication and behaviours. This research offers an alternate view; that human behaviours are not necessarily altered by these new cyber platforms. Instead, both positive and negative human communication behaviours are increasingly crossing multiple cyber platforms (Kowalski et al., 2008; Li, 2007), and thus more difficult to track and remove, and are global rather than localised. Even the issue of anonymity causing unethical, disinhibited or detached behaviour aligns has been raised in pre-industrial times (Zhuo, 2010). The raft of theoretical constructs explaining human behaviours are therefore still relevant. However, the effects are enhanced as a consequences of globalised online communications, particularly the consequences of

our negative and aggressive human behaviour on one another. Some of these effects are seen in the empirical evidence generated within this research.

7.8 CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research into workplace cyberbullying among Australian public sector participants allowed the researcher to draw the following conclusions and to provide the following guidelines for future research. This research goes some way to indicate that workplace cyberbullying is not a marginal problem and in this regard, the focus and two research questions originally posed by this research are substantiated.

The core focus question, 'what is the prevalence, and what are the consequences, of negative workplace cyber communication (cyberbullying) in the Australian public sector?' guided the development of two research questions:

1. How do Australian public sector employees perceive cyberbullying as manifesting within Australian public sector work environments? (prevalence)
2. How do Australian public sector employees perceive workplace cyberbullying as affecting their workplace stress, job satisfaction, work performance, and organisational culture? (consequences)

7.8.1 Key theme #1: Workplace cyberbullying prevalence rates

Empirical evidence found from this research substantiated the RQ1, and confirmed public servants perceived workplace cyberbullying as manifesting in Australian public sector organisations. Additionally, evidence found that two types of workplace cyberbullying were generally displayed in government agencies that aligned to Einarsen et al.'s (2009) behavioural inventory of negative behaviours:

1. Task-related, where supervisors, colleagues, peers, staff, external clients and individuals use the available workplace cyber technologies to individually, as a team/group, or mass broadcast an attack on the target to undermine, hurt, embarrass them and/or damage their professional reputation.
2. Person-related, where supervisors, colleagues, peers, staff, external clients and/or individuals use the available workplace cyber technologies to individually, as a team/group or mass broadcast an attack on the target's

personality, character, gender, religion, health, background to demoralise and destabilise the target.

Within the context of the task-related and person-related workplace cyberbullying, public servants perceived a number of characteristics that were similarly conceptualised to traditional face-to-face bullying, yet with a technological element. These workplace cyberbullying characteristics featured the imbalance of power, intent and intensity, and repetition (Einarsen et al., 2011; Lutgen-Sandvick & Tracey, 2012; Rigby, 2002; Salin, 2001; Vartia, 2001; Zapf & Gross, 2001). However, with the use of technology, these characteristics could be used overtly or covertly, anonymously to cyberbullying the target either on a one-to-one basis, or mass broadcast (Kowalski et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010). The first characteristic of workplace cyberbullying is referred to as the imbalance of power. As seen below, technology added a new dimension to the elements attributed to traditional face-to-face workplace bullying and schoolyard cyberbullying.

Imbalance of power

Comparable to traditional face-to-face workplace bullying, cyberbullying perpetrators overtly or covertly (Olweus, 1993) used their organisational hierarchical position, or influential position as a non-government client or customer, to cyberbully the target (Coyne et al., In press). This behaviour manifested on a one-to-one basis (i.e., and email, phone call, sms made direct to the target), or across teams, groups and include other supervisors (i.e., emails or video conferencing across groups), to deride and publically embarrass the target. Subordinate employees were also coerced into publically acceding to their superiors or lose their job. Internally-based perpetrators, such as co-workers, colleagues, other agency workers, covertly "discussed" the target on Facebook or email to the group without the target's knowledge or behind their back. These same perpetrators also covertly and anonymously (Kowalski et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010) copied and disseminated the target's Facebook comments into a work email to the group or the supervisor. Alternatively, internal and external perpetrators anonymously publically mass broadcast, or "viralise", cyberbullying comments, posts and videos using websites (Kowalski et al., 2008; Li, 2007). Public servants perceived that public sector organisations have very few mechanisms by which to protect them from this cyber behaviour, particularly from anonymous cyberbullying.

Intent and intensity

Within the context of workplace cyberbullying, intent and intensity interconnected on a number of levels. Intent was highly significant for the target and was separated into accidental and malicious intent. Accidental workplace cyberbullying was more likely to be perceived as manifesting if employees saw a misalignment between their changing work expectations and organisation's old policies and governance processes (Robbins et al., 2004; Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008). While public servants generally agreed that the public service provided numerous policies and guidelines, rules and regulations governing behaviour, these were often viewed as out-of-date, unfair or unjust (Parzefall & Salin, 2010; Cropanzano et al., 2011). Public servants also perceived workplace cyberbullying as accidental and impersonal if the behaviour arose from the perpetrator's inexperience, poor writing and/or comprehension skills, unfamiliarity in cyber technology, or confusion regarding organisationally appropriate behaviour. However, public servants observed that if these accidental interactions were experienced, then this behaviour could lead to a more uncertain and intense work environment particularly if the cyberbullying accidentally, or deliberately, included other team members or groups across the agency (Kiesler, 1986; Monks & Coyne, 2011; Slonje & Smith, 2008; Suler, 2004; Zhuo, 2010).

In line with SIP theory (Walther, 1992, 1996; Walther et al., 2005), accidental misinterpretations escalated due to a combination of inflectionless text-based cyber communications thereby producing blunt messages that precipitated immediate and heated responses, the latter being more aggressive when individuals felt organisationally empowered to act aggressively. Aggressive organisational cultures supported the development of online social disinhibition (Suler, 2004), particularly in "virtual" teams where geographically dispersed employees' online communications reflect their detachment to their peers' responses. In these instances, the target is more likely to feel cyberbullying more intensely given they are publically undermined or embarrassed in some way, with potential professional reputation and career damage (Giumetti et al., 2012).

Malicious cyberbullying was generally perceived by public servants as felt more intensely, as the perpetrator consciously undermined the target/s reputation or career prospects (Giumetti et al., 2012). This intensifying effect combined with the

sense that the cyberbullying was not only "boundaryless" (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013) and inescapable and extremely difficult to remove from public websites. This latter point regards work-based technologies accessed by employees at work and at home, at any time, and anywhere.

Repetitiveness

In line with traditional face-to-face workplace bullying (Rigby, 2002), public servants perceived both internal and external perpetrators of workplace cyberbullying harassed their target/s with a continuous stream of email, sms, phone calls and websites. If this ongoing, continuous, and inescapable (and often public and global) flow of online bullying and harassment was not defused by the organisation's management or employee support processes, then the online violence quickly escalated (Ertureten et al., 2013). However, both internal perpetrators also used cyber technology to mass broadcast one post or comment either across the target's work-team or group email, while external perpetrators could name and shame the target by uploading a YouTube video on the internet.

Transitioning face-to-face workplace bullying and workplace cyberbullying

Empirical evidence from this research confirmed that workplace cyberbullying is cross-pollinating or transitioning from online bullying into face-to-face bullying. Teams who discuss a target on a group Facebook site will manifest different behaviours when face-to-face with the target, and this behaviour generates more online chat. A new finding within the context of workplace cyberbullying, which is somewhat similar to traditional face-to-face workplace bullying (Kern & Grandey, 2009; Robbins et al., 2004; van Jaarsveld et al., 2010; Weatherbee & Kelloway, 2006), is that workplace cyberbullying is manifesting across three levels. These three levels include:

- (a) organisationally, where the organisation's policies, and governance frameworks, systems and processes foster aggressive online and offline organisational behaviour and promote a dysfunctional organisation,
- (b) internally, or between government employees either working in the same government organisation or as a public servant liaising across many government organisations, and

- (c) externally, or from non-government clientele such as members of the public.

7.8.2 Key theme #2: Consequences of workplace cyberbullying

Empirical evidence substantiated the RQ2. This question examined public servants' perceptions as to the impact of workplace cyberbullying. Elements considered by this research included stress levels, job satisfaction, job performance, and perceptions as to the efficacy of public sector organisations' culture in neutralising cyberbullying events. The impact or consequences of workplace cyberbullying were various.

Increased workplace stress and lowered workplace performance

Antecedents included aggressive culturally accepted behaviours that contradicted explicit cultural codes of conduct leading to indifferent or callous offline and online interactions and causing targets to lose confidence in their capabilities and trust in their organisation's ability to provide fair conflict resolution processes. Similar to research into traditional face-to-face workplace bullying (Kern & Grandey, 2009), longevity of cyberbullying events and public humiliation caused by comments and photos/videos being mass broadcast across public websites to undermine a targets' reputation led to stress-related health outcomes.

Where workplace cyber fatigue, a form of work stress and "burnout" (Kern & Grandey, 2009) caused by the feeling of being constantly connected to work through technology) and workplace cyberbullying are experienced, employees are more likely to suffer a drop in other areas of work and life. Similar to research into face-to-face bullying, workplace "burnout" and bullying results in mental and physical health decreased individual (Tuckey, Dollar, Hosking, & Winefield, 2009), and organisational work performance (Coyne, Craig, & Chong, 2004).

According to the empirical evidence, insufficient or ineffective workplace training or experience (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011; Simons, 1999; White, 2000) on best practice usage of workplace cyber technology is an added factor in creating performance issues as a result of frustrated and stressed staff who struggle with changing, technologies and guidelines. Inadequate workplace safeguards to mitigate cyberbullying events leading employees to doubt the organisation's ability to support them and eroding trust.

Decreased job satisfaction| Duty of care

Antecedents included a combination of the type of job roles (Leymann, 1996; West et al., 2014). These included, for example, frontline staff dealing directly with a range of offline and online clients and customers. Confusion also arose regarding the delineation of job responsibilities, where public servants perceived themselves as more likely to be exposed to workplace cyberbullying events due to individuals uncertainty about who was the responsible authority. Finally, cyber technologies' capacity for fast feedback capability enabled perpetrators to quickly escalate issues out of control and embarrass employees within a public or global forum. Decreased job satisfaction, arising from employees' perceptions of being threatened by internal and external clientele, has duty of care implications for employers under the *WHS Act 2011* (i.e., employees are entitled to working in an environment free from harassment and bullying).

Decreased confidence in organisational culture

Public servants' consistently reported a perception that the explicit culture (i.e., legislation, policies, rules and regulations as enlivened through governance processes) of their specific agency and/or whole-of-public sector appeared out of alignment with the actual lived workplace behaviours. In this regard, while anti-bullying policies and practices were extensive, they were often seen as insufficient when staff or managers used them to interpret cyberbullying events, or intervene and prevent workplace cyberbullying communication and behaviours. This is not to say the organisation did nothing, only that the resolution processes were perceived as inefficacious.

This finding aligns to other research indicating ambiguous governance frameworks (explicit culture) inconsistent with actual workplace behaviours often legitimised perpetrator's aggressive behaviours (Lutgen-Sandvick & Tracey, 2012). Consequently, anti-bullying policies characterised by unclear processes act as a disincentive to employees thinking about reporting the behaviour (White, 2000). Indeed, this often transparent juxtaposition between the overt human resource policies and actual, and covert organisational behaviour has been linked to a term entitled "organisational deviance" (Robinson & Bennet, 1995), where aggressive workplace interactions were normalised (Einarsen, 1999; Leymann, 1996; Zapf, 1999). In this regard, changed work expectations, especially when implemented

without training, are seen by employees as now leading to sometimes inescapable workplace cyberbullying events being experienced anytime and anywhere.

7.8.3 Research variables

Variables mapped employees' perceptions regarding the prevalence of workplace cyberbullying in their work environment, their perceptions as to the impact on their job performance, job satisfaction, stress levels, and the efficacy of organisational processes in resolving this phenomenon. In this regard, it is suggested that Australian public sector employees working across Commonwealth, State and Territory, and Local government organisations perceive workplace cyberbullying as manifesting in their workplaces. Additionally, workplace cyberbullying was positively correlated with work stress levels, and negatively correlated with job performance, job satisfaction and organisational culture. Importantly, these findings are new within the context of the Australian public sector, and may have implications across the wider Australian labour force. Developing intervention and prevention strategies specifically aimed at workplace cyberbullying may result in the decrease number of employees bullied each year, and thus reduce the associated costs. It is also important for organisations to segregate the costs of face-to-face bullying and cyberbullying, as the costs of the latter remain unknown and yet are potentially economically significant.

Framed within the SIP theoretical model (Walther, 1992, 2005, 2011), this research thus contributes to development into workplace cyberbullying. In general, the findings from phases' data (qualitative and quantitative) was supportive of SIP theory explanation for how workplace cyberbullying impacted perceptions of workplace stress, job satisfaction and performance and organisational culture. Importantly, SIP theory was highly useful in explaining how workplace culture influenced employees' perceptions about their work and at home lives. These finding is new within the context of the Australian public sector and our nation's workforce.

Firstly, using SIP as the theoretical filter, the qualitative evidence implied that public servants are in fact highly adaptive in their use of a range of both old (email, instant messaging) and new cyber technologies (social media). In this respect, government employees depend upon their perception of accepted workplace behaviours to interpret both offline and online communicating (Walther, 1992; Walther et al., 2005) and whole-of-organisation and whole-of-sector networking

(Fulk & Yuan, 2013). Furthermore, the work restrictions that restrain public servants from using online social cues, such as emoticons, does not restrict the development of professional workplace relationships. This is useful.

Secondly, essentially this theoretical framework allowed the researcher insight into employees' perceptions regarding the dichotomy between explicit governance frameworks or overt cultural expectations (mandated through public sector legislation and policy dictates) and the actual, covert or implicit offline and online workplace behaviours (implicit culture). Australian public servants' attempts at resolving this contradiction between cultures has now been identified by empirical evidence. In brief, this finding is new within the context of workplace cyberbullying and the Australian public sector.

7.8.4 Researcher's closing statement | Practical implications

This research demonstrates that, within the context of a hierarchical and rules-based organisation, such as the Australian public sector, aggressive workplace cultures and workplace cyberbullying (Salin & Hoel, 2011) are virtually synonymous. Furthermore, workplace cyberbullying leads to perceptions of increased workplace stress, and decreased job satisfaction and work performance. Like any other enabling tool (Boucaut, 2003), culture can explicitly (through policies, job design, governance processes), or implicitly (through employee interpersonal and socio-relational interactions), encourage or dissuade workplace behaviours. Institutional organisations that display internal "organisation-as-bully" rules, systems and processes are more likely to support and sustain attitudes and behaviour that fosters workplace cyberbullying behaviour (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013). Employees working within an aggressive organisational culture, and experiencing workplace cyberbullying during work and home hours may be at risk of cognitive fusion.

Cognitive fusion arises from a functional contextual theory of language and cognition known as Relational Frame Theory (RFT; Hayes, 2004), whereby an individual's thoughts are so influenced by a local group's version of the "truth" that targets intellectually and emotionally "buy into" the negative words or text used that the group uses to describe them (the target). According to Hayes (2004), RFT is "amplified by culture" (p. 665) and explains how "human language and cognition are both dependent on relational frames. When we "think, reason, speak with meaning,

or listen with understanding, we do so by deriving relations among events – among words and events, words and words, events and events" (Hayes, 2004, p. 649). Within an organisational context "the social/verbal community [or work group] establishes a context [or culture] in which symbols relate mutually to other events and have functions based on these relations" (Luoma & Hayes, In press, p. 2). In this regard, the "thought about the event evokes the same emotional reaction as the event itself, leading to behaviours that would follow if the thought was a fact" (Wicksell et al., 2008, p. 492). A practical treatment of cognitive fusion is cognitive defusion. Cognitive defusion teaches "clients to think thoughts as thoughts, not so much through logical argument or direct instruction as through changes in the context of language and cognition itself, so as to make responding more fluid and functional" (Luoma & Hayes, In press, p. 6). This represents one practical implication for resolving workplace cyberbullying for the individual employee (Practical Solution #1).

Australian public sector workplaces are increasingly reliant on the "mass connectivity" (Livingstone, 2015) provided as a consequence of cyber technologies' capacity to communicate and facilitate timely deliverables and outputs (APSC, 2013c). The introduction of the first "genuine handheld, walk-around computer" (Grossman, 2007) and internet-enabled iPhone in 2007 has enabled employees to stay connected irrespective of their actual work or social activities. While the benefits have generally been positive, the emerging forms of negative mobile workplace cyber communications, such as cyberbullying, have the potential to reshape the very fabric of hierarchical, rules-based organisations and institutions. A practical solution to the "connected employee" who is experiencing workplace cyberbullying at work and home would be to train them on (a) how to seek and identify the computer IP (internet protocols) of the computer or mobile device being used by the "anonymous" and to report this IP to the police or organisation internal investigators, (b) how to report the cyberbullying behaviour by automatically blocking and forwarding the cyberbullying messages to a police or organisational IT server for storage and further investigation, and (c) personal resilience and provide the target with a mentor or support group. This process would unveil the "organisational taboo" (Einarsen, 2000) and allow the issue/s to be resolved rather than hidden (Practical Solution #2).

Workplace cyberbullying is dangerous to organisational and employee productivity as it is generally hidden from official "eyes' and is "underground" or "off the radar". Perpetrators' capacity to easily and quickly reach a mass audience, and to subtly use a variety of workplace and private cyber platforms to influence employees' behaviour is unprecedented. This is despite of the safeguard of organisational anti-bullying legislation, policies and occupational health and safety risk assessment systems and laws (Piotrowski, 2012a, 2012b). A practical solution to this "underground" culture, that subtly or overtly influences employees' perceptions and behaviours through official and unofficial cyber platforms, is education and training that ensures everyone knows what the behaviour looks and feels like, and are clear about how to report the behaviour when they see it. The reporting mechanisms may first need to be through a central repository to ensure the system is cohesive, effective and remains ethical by remaining outside each public sector agencies' bureaucracy and power base ((Practical Solution #3).

As stated by the President of the Business Council of Australia, "Connectivity is changing the power relationships between consumers [customers and client] and companies [organisations]; it is …disrupting [existing] business models. (Livingstone, 2015, No ordinary disruption, para. 13). Within this context, the Australian public sector, and indeed Australian businesses and organisations, are potentially experiencing a new employment paradigm brought about by internet-enabled CMC. Within this constantly changing and instantaneous CMC environment, which is often intensified though ill-defined, changing work expectations, workplace aggression is perceived by public servants as becoming naturalised and "normal".

For example, given employers are increasingly asked to do more with less the more likely they use and rely on online technologies to enhance and speed up their work capabilities while at work and at home (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Public servants now have the option of being constantly "wired into" their work. Furthermore, while targets of traditional face-to-face workplace bullying can leave the workplace for another job, targets of workplace cyberbullying are followed by their online cyberbullies to their new workplace and home. The cyberbullying is now inescapable, and if it is anonymous broadcast on public websites, is incredibly difficult to remove. The potential impact on targets' reputations, career prospects and their financial independence is higher. A practical solution to this issue is to develop

clear legislation that allows affected employees to report the behaviour to a legal representative or police who have the resources and legal power to stop the behaviour (Practical Solution #4).

This research also found that public servants perceive the manifestation of online workplace aggression and bullying across old and new technology platforms. These include the relatively old workplace email and instant messaging that were introduced into government workplaces from the 1990s, and the more recent social media platforms such as internal and public websites such as blogs and Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, sms (APSC, 2013c, 2014a, 2014b). The interaction between the old and new technologies in the workplace is interesting, where social media commentary is being used overtly or covertly to undermine targets (e.g., a target's private Facebook post pasted into a work email and shared with the team or supervisor). In this regard, the anonymity of technology is also being used at a more sophisticated level, where perpetrators use the constraints imposed by the organisation's explicit culture to remain anonymous. For instance, in the case of a target's Facebook post being pasted into a workplace email and sent to the target's supervisor, in general the target is rarely advised by the supervisor of the claimant's identity, only of the allegation. Thus the target is left wondering which of his/her Facebook "friends" is the cyberbully. Practical solutions to this problem could follow those discussed at Practical Solutions #2, #3 and #4.

Furthermore, the influx of personal and/or workplace internet-enabled mobile smart devices (Mumtaz & Rodriguez, 2014) being progressively used by all government employees (APSC, 2013c, 2014a, 2014b) enables public servants to be contacted anywhere and anytime during the day or night via these "old" (i.e., email, telephone, sms) and "new" (i.e., social media) technologies. Consequently, workplace cyberbullying can now track public servants from work to home, and from one workplace to another. This research found that this online behaviour is happening and that public servants are struggling with it, across full strata of senior, middle and junior officials. Public servants have also found that cyberbullying events cannot be quickly or easily resolved. While some attempt has been made to develop whole-of-service and agency-specific guidance on these matters (APSC, 2013b), empirical evidence from this research found that the existing legislative and policy-based support frameworks are simply not perceived by employees as effective in

dealing with this new range of workplace cyberbullying behaviours, variables, events and outcomes. This issue could be resolved though novel use of Practical Solution numbers #1, #2 and #4.

These public sector legislative and policy-based support frameworks, most of which are already struggling under the existing levels of traditional forms of face-to-face workplace bullying and aggression (APSC, 2014a; APC, 2010; House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Education and Employment, 2012), are perceived by public servants as reasonably ineffective in responding efficaciously with workplace cyberbullying. Indeed, empirical evidence from this research found that public servants generally perceived government organisations as generally entitlement-based, where implicit aggressive sub-cultures and offline and online bullying is ignored on proviso the perpetrator/s achieves results for the organisation and "gets the job done." While this implicit culture is generally in direct conflict with the explicit culture, the nature of the "results warrant the behaviour" implicate culture acts as an enabler to workplace aggression that infects offline and online workplace behaviours (Muhl, 2003). Within this context, explicit workplace culture processes and practices are more likely to be ineffective during workplace cyberbullying events if the perpetrator is:

(a) powerful and/or influential due to their organisational positional power and is perceived as untouchable, and/or

(b) personally influential through work networks, contacts, or longevity and is perceived as somehow untouchable due to support by management, and/or

(c) an external client and therefore untouchable as the relevant public service's code of conduct legislation determining workplace behaviours does not cover non-government clients.

Importantly, this research found that internal government employees together with external clients used cyber technologies to anonymously harass their public sector targets, and thus remain unknown. This added an additional layer of intensity for targets, who often would be unsure if their perpetrators were sitting next to them in the workplace, or an external client (D'Cruz & Noronha, 2013; Monks & Coyne, 2011). Furthermore, cyber technology was used by internal or external perpetrators to mass broadcast inaccurate, embarrassing or hurtful information, either

anonymously or openly (Kowalski et al., 2008). Unremitting cyberbullying arising from workplaces was perceived by public servants as influencing perceptions of job satisfaction, however greater effects were perceived on stress and job performance, both of which could result in eroded health. Employee well-being and performance consequences were perceived as being misinterpreted by management as underperformance, thereby placing employees in greater danger of being managed for poor performance, redistributed, or even dismissed from employment. A practical solution for this issue would include the combined application of #1 and #3.

Crucially, this research found government employees are more at risk of coercion by their supervisors. Empirical evidence found that subordinates may be overtly or covertly threatened as an under performer and thus damage their professional reputation and career prospects. Similarly, a subordinate may be advised by their supervisor that their private online cyber communications breaches that public service's Code of Conduct (e.g., *Public Service Act 1999, s.13*) and used as evidence to implement sanctions or dismissal. These last two issues are perceived as a very real threats, particularly in light of the in this current environment of government downsizing, just-in-time management and production, and general resource restrictions (Dollard, 2003). Public sector employees were also perceiving that cyber technology provides less time to reflect and develop considered online responses, thus increasing the potential risk that important decisions or statements be made without due reflection as to their impact. This issue would be resolve through the novel application of Practical Solution #3, and possibly #4.

Workplace cyberbullying: A third culture

This research has found that, due to Australian public sector's explicit and implicit cultural processes, public servants have developed a semi-clandestine, unethical and unprincipled cyber communications stream, "third culture" or "cyber-underground", that is affecting employees' workplace behaviour. This third culture is characterised by the online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004), whereby perpetrators anonymously embarrass their target/s without fear of social penalty and thus become inured to the impact of their actions (Kiesler, 1986; Monks & Coyne, 2011). The potential for anonymity to increases unethical behaviour was discussed as early as the fourth century by Plato, who observed, "Morality comes from full disclosure; without accountability for our actions we would all behave unjustly." (Zhuo, 2010).

This perspective has not yet been identified in other international or Australian organisational research, however, given the discussion in this study regarding explicit and implicit culture, and the power vested in implicit culture on employee behaviour, it seems highly probable that covert online workplace communications are creating a new point of influence that is affecting employee behaviour. The way in which workplace communications is conducted across either cyber-underground is modelled by employees (Leymann, 1996; Robinson & O'Leary-Kelly, 1998; Vardi & Wiener, 1996), and thus fosters either respectful or non-respective online, and offline, work behaviours. This cyber-underground is an unconscious development, mainly resulting from the contemporary nature and constantly changing cyber environment.

The lack of understanding as to how organisational culture is being influenced by cyber communications has implications for Australia's future organisational and economic performance. Lack of understanding about how cyber communications influence workplaces also has the potential to create two organisational cultures. First, workplace "cyber-undergrounds" have the potential to develop and support collaborative and respectful workplace behaviours that align and uphold to the public sector's official behaviours as enshrined within legislated codes of conduct. Second, workplace cyber-undergrounds can potentially develop and support aggressive and dysfunctional workplace behaviours that are misaligned to the official behavioural laws and policies. This element also has links to an employers' duty of care to provide employees with a work environment free of harassment and bullying (WHS Act 2011). In any event, employees perceive that the second, dysfunctional culture as manifesting with little organisational oversight.

With this in mind, the researcher recommends consideration of a workplace cyberbullying definition based on perceptions of employees working in Australian organisations:

> *Workplace cyberbullying behaviours are bullying behaviours and communications that are conducted by perpetrators who are in some way connected to the target through the workplace, and progressed across any internet-connected online technology. This behaviour is conducted either overtly or covertly (anonymously), and can occur at any time during the day*

or night with a view to harm, embarrass or hurt the target's mental and physical wellbeing, reputation and/or career aspirations.

7.8.5 Directions for Future Research

Empirical evidence arising from this research strongly recommends a number of opportunities for further study, all of which should provide practical outcomes for workplaces both in Australia and overseas. First, the empirical evidence from this research would translate well to academic papers for dissemination across international and domestic journals and forums with a view to generate discussions across academic, organisational and political spheres. Secondly, the researcher proposes that any future studies into Australian workplace cyberbullying investigate the development of new or improved intervention and prevention workplace anti-cyberbullying programs, including anti-cyberbullying legislation, policies, education and training, guidelines and processes specifically designed for Australian workplaces that set a clear premise for zero tolerance for all forms of workplace bullying (Grigg, 2010). Such research would also examine improved prevention measures and gain improved insight into the motivation and goals of workplace cyberbullying perpetrators and organisational aggression within this new context with a addressing the issue from a three pronged perspective: (a) the workplace cyberbully target/victim, (b) the workplace cyberbully, and (c) the organisation.

To develop better prevention measures, the subsequent avenue of new research would examine the effect of workplace cyberbullying on Australian public sector targets/victims, perpetrators, and observers/witnesses. This research might source three categories, including self-identified targets/victims, perpetrators (on the basis perpetrators self-identified), and observers/witnesses. These categories, in turn, might be sourced from three areas: (a) government employees from within one agency/department, (b) external government employees who interact with that agency/department as either government clients and customers, and (c) external non-government stakeholders, clients and customers who regularly deal with the agency/department. This research might use the UK's workplace cyberbullying measure (Farley et al., 2013) to identify each groups' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying prevalence rates and consequences, and examine how organisational culture is perceived. This research might also examine the motivations and goals of internal and external perpetrators, internal and external perceptions of organisational

aggression levels employees, perceptions of external clients and customers who self-identify as targets/victims, perpetrators and witnesses/observers. Analysis of each sample group might include:

- how targets/victims cope with workplace cyberbullying and at what point do they decide to leave an agency,
- how internal and external perpetrators view their behaviour,
- how the organisation's culture is perceived by internal and external government and non-government clients and customers,
- identifying whether existing intervention and prevention measures are perceived as efficacious and inefficacious,
- whether external stakeholders opt to avoid interacting with the agency due to the agency employees' poor online behaviour, and
- similarities and differences between the three sample groups' perceptions of workplace cyberbullying, what it means to be a perpetrator, target/victim and witness/observer.

A statistical model could also be designed in tandem with the study described above, perhaps framed as a regression analysis. Given the costs of face-to-face bullying on organisational costs (e.g., insurance premiums, recruitment and training, and unexplained absences from work such as sick leave) (Comcare, 2012, 2014a, 2014b), this research would investigate the impact of workplace cyberbullying on employees' workplace performance. The outcome of this research would be to (a) apprise employers as to the prevalence rates and real consequences of workplace cyberbullying in their organisations, and (b) assist employers in developing best practice duty-of-care mechanisms to better support employees, mitigate cyberbullying risks, and provide faster and more effective conflict resolutions This changing environment has arguably developed new or refreshed roles and responsibilities for employers who have a duty of care to provide employees with a safe working environment (West et al., 2014).

This research also strongly suggests the need for an interdisciplinary study conducted across the variety of organisational, bullying, and cyberbullying disciplines. Cyberbullying disciplines might include juvenile and youth

cyberbullying, and workplace cyberbullying. Such a study could identify how the variables associated with the different technology mediums, research methodologies, and workplace environments (i.e., small business, small/medium/large private and government organisations) influence human CMC behaviours (Yzer & Southewell, 2008). Such a cross-disciplinary approach would assist in conceptualising why, when and how human behaviours transition from offline into online domains, and vice versa. In this regard, workplace cyberbullying studies could be framed contextually. This is particularly important within the workplace and organisational context, where the traditional effects of face-to-face interactions are now being framed online, with the potential for immediate, public, mass broadcast. In this regard, the researcher recommends further research into workplace cyberbullying phenomenon at a domestic and international level. This would to encompass, for example, workplace face-to-face aggression, harassment and bullying, workplace cyberbullying, cyberbullying together with research into public and private organisational processes to identify the effects of existing and future technologies on human behaviours within a multilevel framework.

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Appendices

Appendix A UHREC participants' consent form

Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FOR QUT RESEARCH PROJECT
– Confidential Interview –

Determining the prevalence and consequences of negative workplace cyber communications across the Australian public sector.

QUT Ethics Approval Number 1300000114

RESEARCH TEAM

Principal Researcher:	Felicity Lawrence	PhD student
Associate Researcher:	Dr Nanette Bahr	Supervisor

School of Teaching and Learning – Faculty of Education – Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

DESCRIPTION

This international collaborative research project is being undertaken as part of a PhD for Felicity Lawrence in collaboration with the University of Sheffield, Nottingham, UK.

The purpose of this international collaborative research project is to determine the prevalence and consequences of negative workplace cyber communications such as cyberbullying or negative email or online/social media, across the Australian public sector with the view of developing best practice legislation and policy, and implementing education intervention programs that serves to support and, where necessary protect, all employees within Australian workplaces. The University of Sheffield will use this data to develop a new workplace cyberbullying measure or instrument which all agencies will be able to use to determine negative workplace cyber communications.

You are invited to participate in this project because you have been identified as an Australian public sector Human Resource manager, or general manager or psychologist affiliated with the Employee Assistance Program who support Australian public sector employees on workplace issues such as psychological stress linked to work pressure and workplace bullying, and who are immersed in dealing with leading edge issues arising across the Australian public sector.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation will involve an audio recorded interview at CIT Canberra, phone interview or other agreed location that will take approximately 45 minutes of your time. Questions will include 'how would you describe negative workplace cyber communications?', 'have you observed, experienced or heard of anyone who has been subjected to this behaviour?'

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do agree to participate you can withdraw from the project without comment or penalty. If you withdraw, any identifiable

information already obtained from you will be destroyed. Your decision to participate or not participate will in no way impact upon your current or future employment with QUT or the Australian public sector.

EXPECTED BENEFITS

It is expected that this project will benefit you. However, these benefits may be as a consequence of new or refreshed legislation and Australian public sector work management policies and/or practices.

RISKS

There are low to negligible risks associated with your participation in this project. It may be possible that certain themes raised during this interview will cause distress, at which time you may at any time request the researcher to pause or discontinue the interview. If you find you are in any way distressed, then it is strongly recommended you contact your agency's Employee Assistance hotline on 1300 361 797 or email eap@gov.com.au, or Life Line on 131 114.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially. Participants are not required to provide their name or the names of other individual persons in any of the responses. Any names or personal identifying material will be deleted and replaced by an alphanumeric by the researcher.

Confidentiality:

Prior to commencement, all participants will sign a Confidentiality form with the researcher stating that the interview material will remain anonymous and unaffiliated, and that your names and other identifying information will be deleted and replaced by an alphanumerical descriptors prior to research publication.

As this project involves audio recording accessed only by the researcher, all participants will be provided with an opportunity to verify their comments and responses prior to final inclusion. At the project's conclusion the audio recording will be deleted. **Participants can also elect not to be audio recorded**.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate.

QUESTIONS / FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

If have any questions or require further information, please contact one of the research team members below.

Felicity Lawrence	**Dr Nanette Bahr**
	07 3138 0585
felicity.lawrence@student.qut.edu.au	n.bahr@qut.edu.au

CONCERNS / COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF THE PROJECT

QUT is committed to research integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. However, if you do have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Unit on 07 3138 5123 or email ethicscontact@qut.edu.au. The QUT Research Ethics Unit is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an impartial manner.

Thank you for helping with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

CONSENT FORM FOR QUT RESEARCH PROJECT
– Interview –

Determining the prevalence and consequences of negative workplace cyber communications across the Australian public sector.

QUT Ethics Approval Number 1300000114

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felicity.lawrence@student.qut.edu.au

Dr Nanette Bahr
07 3138 0585 n.bahr@qut.edu.au

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team.
- Understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you can contact the Research Ethics Unit on 07 3138 5123 or email ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have concerns about the ethical conduct of the project.
- Understand that you can contact your agency's Employee Assistance Program on 1300 361 797 Employee or Life Line on 131 114 if you feel distressed.
- Understand that your name will be removed from all research material and replaced by an alphanumeric and that non-identifiable data collected in this project may be used as comparative data in future projects.
- Agree that all discussions will remain confidential and that any comments made during group discussions will remain unattributed and not used against individuals.
- Agree to participate in the project.

Please tick the relevant box below:

☐ I **agree** for the interview to be audio recorded.

☐ I **do not agree** for the interview to be audio recorded.

Name .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Researcher's Name .....

Signature .....

Date .....

Please return this sheet to the investigator.

Appendix B Study 1: Participants' Question Schedule

Questions/topics	Relationship to research questions
1. How do you currently define, explain or determine workplace social media or workplace cyber communications? E.g., work email, text messages, Facebook, blogs, instant messaging. The definition of social media used by this research is: 'Workplace cyber behaviour or cyber communications uses technology as the basis for work based communication including email, Facebook, Twitter, sms, YouTube etc.' 2. Can you describe the key characteristics of negative workplace cyber behaviour? An example? 3. Do you think this cyber behaviour may be prevalent and if so why? 4. Do you think any of the following terms could be applied to the Australian public sector?	**RQ1**

- Cyber harassment (directing obscenities and derogatory comments at specific individuals focusing on gender, race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation)
- Cyber stalking (use of the Internet or other electronic means to stalk or harass an individual, a group of individuals, or an organisation)
- Cyberbullying (persistent, repeated negative behaviour enacted through communication technologies (e.g., phone calls, email, text message, social networking websites) by individuals or groups, which creates a hostile work environment. Over time, this impacts negatively on the person facing the behaviour and places them in an increasingly inferior position)

Questions/topics	Relationship to research questions
5. In your view, when resolving or preventing this cyber behaviour, do you think the existing public service legislation, policies and guidelines provide public service employees with the necessary guidance, protection, and intervention strategies to deal with the potential negative impact of social media and cyber communications such as cyberbullying? Can you provide examples?	RQ2
6. From your observations, what do you think is the impact or consequences of these negative forms of cyber communications on public service employees, particularly for employees working on cross government programs or activities, or directly with the public?	
7. Have you observed any environmental or personal characteristics that indicate some people are more likely to be a target [or victim] of negative workplace cyber communications such as cyberbullying? If so what are these characteristics?	RQ2
8. Have you observed any characteristics that indicate some people are more likely to perpetrate negative workplace cyber communications such as cyberbullying? If so what are these characteristics?	
9. *Can you suggest resources or programs that would be helpful for the Australian public sector in supporting intervention strategies?*	

Appendix C PSNews invitation

Study 2 - Qualitative survey

Invitation to Australian public servants to participate Study 2

Invitation to Participate in International Research: Is workplace cyberbullying happening in the Australian public sector?

Collaborative International Research: Two doctoral researchers from the Queensland University of Technology and the University of Sheffield, Nottingham, UK, respectively are collaborating to study negative workplace cyber communications such as cyberbullying. An *anonymous* online survey has been developed that asks employees to identify examples of negative *workplace* cyber communication such as cyberbullying through email or social media or other workplace cyber platforms. The outcomes of this research was twofold:

- identify whether negative workplace cyber behaviours are occurring across the Australia public sector and the impact on employees' mental and physical health, and work performance (AUS); and
- develop a world first workplace cyberbullying measurement tool that organisations and researchers can use to better understand this workplace phenomenon (UK).

People who wish to take part in this 5-10 minute *anonymous* survey can access it at this PS News link [insert link]. To request a copy of the feedback report please email the researchers: Felicity Lawrence at felicity.lawrence@student.qut.edu.au at the Queensland University of Technology, or Sam Farley at sjfarley1@sheffield.ac.uk at the University of Sheffield, Nottingham, UK.

Edition xxx, xx October 2013

Appendix D Study 2: Participants' characteristics

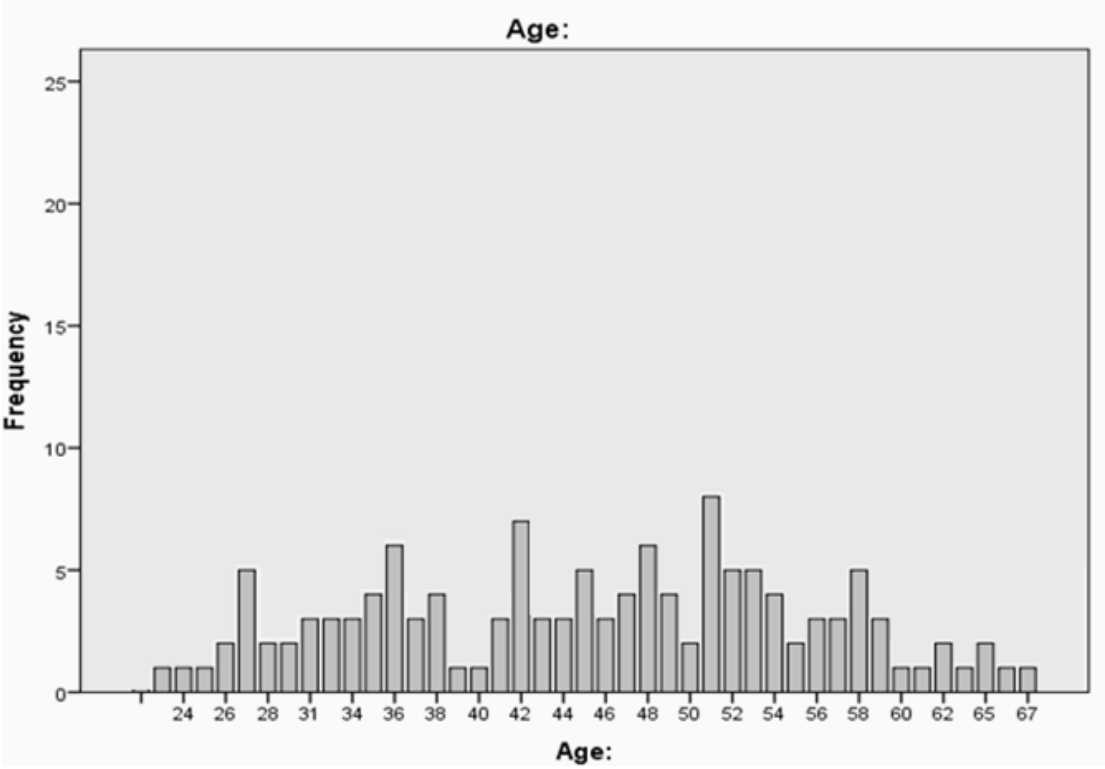

Figure E.1. Study 2 survey respondents: Age groupings.

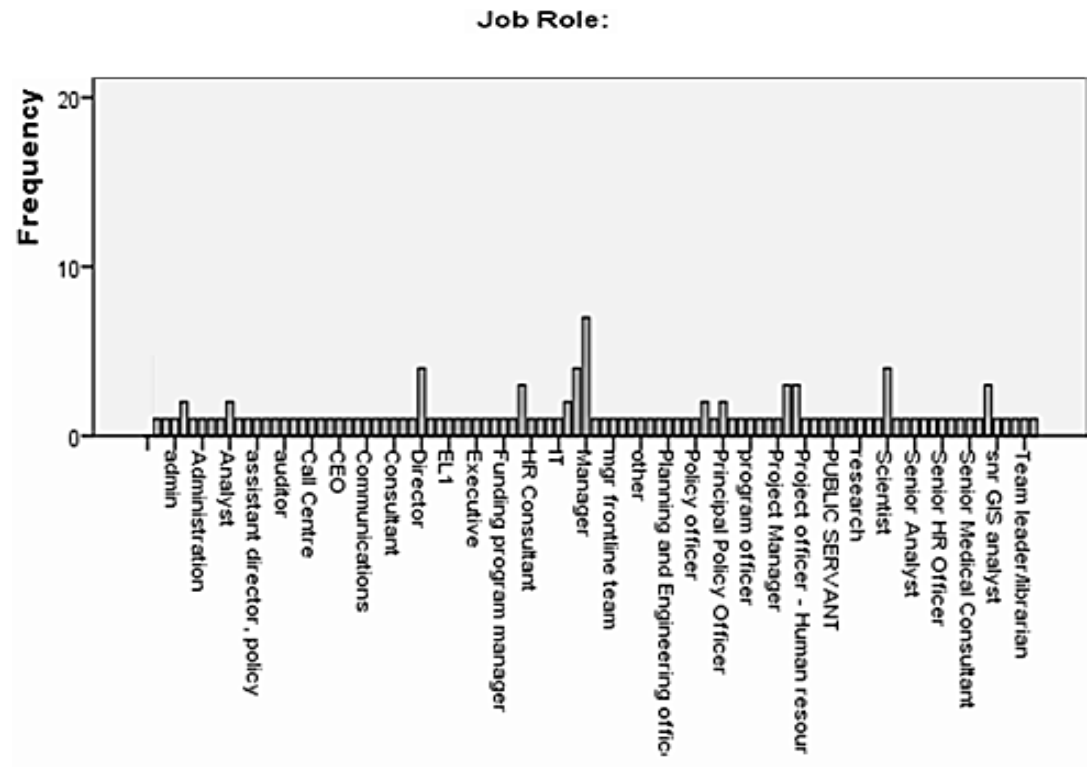

Figure E.2. Study 2 survey respondents: Job roles.

Appendix E Study 2 Qualitative Anonymous Online Survey

Distributed to Australian public sector participants

Study 2

Welcome to our survey and thank you for taking the time to complete it.

This International Research Collaboration Team is comprised of:

Australia: *Nanette Bahr, John Lidstone and Felicity Lawrence,
***Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Education.**
Queensland University of Technology | Victoria Park Rd, Kelvin Grove Queensland

United Kingdom: *Iain Coyne, Carolyn Axtell, Christine Sprigg and Sam Farley
***Division of Psychiatry and Applied Psychology (University of Nottingham)**
Institute of Work Psychology (Management School, University of Sheffield)

This survey will request some demographic information before asking you to describe examples of workplace cyberbullying behaviour.

We define workplace cyberbullying as '**persistent, repeated negative behaviour enacted through communication technologies (e.g., phone calls, email, text message, social networking websites) by individuals or groups, which creates a hostile work environment. Over time, this impacts negatively on the person facing the behaviour and places them in an increasingly inferior position**'

You can navigate through the survey using the **Next** and **Back** buttons at the **bottom of the page**. **Please do not use the forward and back buttons on your web browser.**

The QUT participant consent form can be viewed here. By clicking the 'Next' button, you are giving consent to participate in this study. All data provided will remain confidential and anonymous as feedback was given at group level, with no individuals identified. You reserve the right to withdraw at any time and can do this by closing down the survey. **On the next page we will ask you to create a unique identification code, this information is only being requested in case you would like to remove your data from the study.**

The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete and has received Ethics Committee approval from the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia, and the University of Sheffield, Nottingham, UK. If you have any questions please contact the UK researcher Sam Farley (sjfarley1@sheffield.ac.uk) or the Australian researcher Felicity Lawrence (felicity.lawrence@student.qut.edu.au). A copy of the anonymous feedback report was freely available to everyone within your organisation. Thank you for your help.

Unique Identification Code
If at any point you would like to remove your data from the study please contact the UK researcher Sam Farley (sjfarley1@sheffield.ac.uk), or the Australian researcher Felicity Lawrence (felicity.lawrence@student.qut.edu.au) with your unique identification code. This data cannot be used to identify you.

Please indicate on which day of the month you were born (e.g., if born on the 7th May 1984 you would write: 07)

Please give the last two letters of your first name (e.g., if named Claire you would write: re)

Please give the first two letters of your mother's maiden name

The following questions allow us to make best use of the data. To protect your confidentiality your answers will only be seen by researchers the University of Sheffield, Nottingham, UK, and Queensland University of Technology respectively. This data is anonymous and will not be used to identify you, or shared with any third party.
Age:

Gender:
Male
Female

Job Role:

Please indicate the overall number of years **you have been in employment (e.g., 23 years):**

Please indicate the number of hours **you work** per week **(e.g., 35):**

Which of the following technologies do you use in connection with your work (Please tick all those you use).

Email
Telephone calls
Text messages
Social media websites
Video conferencing software (e.g., Skype)
Instant messaging services

Please indicate any other forms of communication technology you use at work
This is the final page of the questionnaire. **Once you click the next button at the bottom of the page you will not be able to change or edit your responses.**

We define workplace cyberbullying as '**persistent, repeated negative behaviour enacted through communication technologies (e.g., phone calls, email, text message, social networking websites) by individuals or groups, which creates a hostile work environment. Over time, this impacts negatively on the person facing the behaviour and places them in an increasingly inferior position**'
It can occur via email, telephone calls, text messages, social networking websites, regular websites, instant messaging, chat rooms and video conferencing.

Please describe up to three behaviours which you believe could be labelled as workplace cyberbullying acts. These could be behaviours that yourself or colleagues have experienced, or simply acts that you feel reflect the definition of workplace cyberbullying. Please note that these behaviours do not necessarily have to be experienced during work hours. For instance, you may feel that being gossiped about by colleagues via social media is an example of workplace cyberbullying.

As well as more severe acts of cyberbullying, we are also interested in some of the more subtle cyberbullying behaviours. Therefore, if possible try to describe different acts that vary in severity.

Disclaimer: We only require behavioural descriptions. **Please do not name individuals**. If you feel you are being cyberbullied please contact your occupational health advisor, union representative, line manager or HR adviser. Alternatively you can contact your agency's Employee Assistance counselling hotline on 1300 361 797, or the Australian Life Line on 131114.

Workplace Cyberbullying Behaviour 1 (Subtle):

Workplace Cyberbullying Behaviour 2 (Severe):

Workplace Cyberbullying Behaviour 3 (Other):

Many thanks for taking our survey. If you would like your data to be removed from the study please email the UK researcher Sam Farley (sjfarley1@sheffield.ac.uk) or the Australian researcher Felicity Lawrence (felicity.lawrence@student.qut.edu.au) with your anonymous unique identification code (felicity.lawrence@student.qut.edu.au).

If you have been affected by issues relating to cyberbullying you can access support by contacting the cybersmile charity :http://www.cybersmile.org/ **Email: info@cybersmile.org Phone: 0845 688 7277. Alternatively you can contact your agency's Employee Assistance counselling hotline on 1300 361 797, or the Australian Life Line on 131114.**

Appendix F UK Permission | Cyber NAQ-R

University of Nottingham

Study 3 Quantitative

From: Iain Coyne [Iain.Coyne@nottingham.ac.uk]
Sent: Thursday, 20 February 2014 7:33 PM
To: Felicity Lawrence
Cc: Samuel J Farley; Nanette Bahr
Subject: RE: Seeking permission | Cyber-NAQ

Hi Felicity,

Luckily, the rain and wind has not been as much as a problem where I am in the UK than it has been for the South East/South West. However, it has been a pretty miserable and very windy winter so far.

I have no problem whatsoever in you using the CNAQ in your research. As you know, even though we have modified it slightly, the CNAQ items are the same as the NAQ with just a focus on cyber-contexts. I attach our paper which is currently in review and I think for now the best way you can cite the CNAQ is 'in review' in this journal. I would ask that for the moment you keep this paper between yourself and your supervisor just because it is not published yet.

I am not sure if you need permission to use the NAQ beyond citing the appropriate journal where the items and scoring are published. I attach the relevant paper. Obviously, if your ethical process requires it then clearly you need to go down that route, but it would be a tricky conversation with Stale in asking for his permission to use a scale derived from the NAQ which is not the NAQ!

Cheers
Iain
Dr Iain Coyne, Occupational Psychologist, C.Psychol
Associate Professor in Occupational Psychology
Course Director: Work and Organisational Psychology
Division of Psychiatry and Applied Psychology,
University of Nottingham, YANG Fujia Building,
Jubilee Campus,
Wollaton Road,
Nottingham NG8 1(b)B, UK
Tel: (0115) 8466639
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/iwho/
Bullying in Different Contexts Book:
http://www.cambridge.org/gb/knowledge/isbn/item5756738/?site_locale=en_GB

Appendix G Study 3 Quantitative Anonymous Online Survey

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Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FOR QUT RESEARCH PROJECT

Determining the prevalence and consequences of negative workplace cyber communications across the Australian public sector

QUT Ethics Approval Number 1300000114

RESEARCH TEAM

Principal Researcher: Ms Felicity Lawrence

Associate Researcher: Professor Nanette Bahr

DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this project is to determine the prevalence and consequences of negative workplace cyber communications across the Australian public sector. You are invited to participate in this project because you are a member of the Australian public sector and may have witnessed, been involved in, managed, or resolved some form of negative workplace cyber communication.

PARTICIPATION

You are invited to participate in this 10-15 minute questionnaire because you have been identified as an employee working within an Australian public sector department or agency.
This survey will ask you questions about your observations and perceptions on negative workplace cyber communications.

EXPECTED BENEFITS

It is expected that this project will benefit you. However, these benefits may be as a consequence of new or refreshed legislation and Australian public sector work management policies and work practices.

RISKS

There are low to negligible risks associated with your participation in this project. However there is a possibility that certain themes or events that you recall during this process may cause distress. If this is the case then it is strongly recommended you contact your agency's Employee Assistance hotline on 1300 361 797 or Life Line on 131 114.

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY

All comments and responses are anonymous and are treated confidentially. The names of individual persons are not required in any of the responses. **All data will remain confidential and anonymous. You reserve the right to withdraw at any time and can do this by closing down the survey. You**

was asked to create a unique identification code, this information is only being requested in case you would like to remove your data from the study and was anonymous. Any data collected as part of this project was stored securely as per QUT's Management of research data policy.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Submitting the completed online questionnaire is accepted as an indication of your consent to participate in this project.

QUESTIONS / FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

If have any questions or require further information please contact one of the research team members below.

Felicity Lawrence
felicity.lawrence@student.qut.edu.au

Professor Nanette Bahr
n.bahr@qut.edu.au

CONCERNS / COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF THE PROJECT

QUT is committed to research integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. However, if you do have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Unit on 07 3138 5123 or email ethicscontact@qut.edu.au. The QUT Research Ethics Unit is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an impartial manner.

Thank you for helping with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

Queensland University of Technology
Brisbane Australia

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Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

Unique Identifier Code.

If you would like to remove your data from this research please contact Felicity Lawrence (felicity.lawrence@student.qut.edu.au) with your unique identifier code. This data cannot be used to identify you.

Please provide the date of your birth day (eg. if born on 12th May 1984 then write: 12)

Please provide the last two letters of your first name (eg. if your name is Shane then you would write: ne)

Please provide the first two letters of your mother's maiden name.

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

1. What is your age group?

Please select one ...

2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

3. What is your marital status?

- Married / Living With Partner
- Single

4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Please select one ...

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

5. What is your level in the Australian public service?

Please select one ...

6. How would you best describe your role?

Please select one ...

7. What is your current employment status?

Please select one ...

8. How large is your agency?

Please select one ...

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

PART ONE
19 Questions - CYBER-NEGATIVE ACTS QUESTIONNAIRE

The following behaviours are often seen as examples of negative workplace cyber behaviour. Over the last six (6) months, how often have you been subjected to the following negative acts, *at work,* through different forms of work-based technology?

When responding, consider every question in relation to these eight types of *work-based* technology:

1. text messaging,
2. pictures/photos or video clips,
3. phone calls,
4. email,
5. chat rooms (eg .project management),
6. instant messaging,
7. websites, and
8. social networking websites (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, Bebo).

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

Please click on the word that best corresponds with your work-based cyber communication experience over the last six months:

1. Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work.

Please select one ...

2. Being ordered to do work through electronic means below your level of competence.

Please select one ...

3. Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks.

Please select one ...

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

Please click on the word that best corresponds with your work-based cyber communication experience over the last six months:

4. Spreading of gossip and rumours about you.

Please select one ...

5. Being ignored or excluded.

Please select one ...

6. Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e., habits and background), your attitudes or your private life.

Daily

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

Please click on the word that best corresponds with your work-based cyber communication experience over the last six months:

7. Being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage).

Please select one ...

8. Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job.

Please select one ...

9. Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes.

Please select one ...

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

Please click on the word that best corresponds with your work-based cyber communication experience over the last six months:

10. Persistent criticism of your work and effort.

Please select one ...

11. Having your opinions and views ignored.

Please select one ...

12. Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with.

Please select one ...

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

Please click on the word that best corresponds with your work-based cyber communication experience over the last six months:

13. Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines.

Please select one ...

14. Having allegations made against you.

Please select one ...

15. Excessive monitoring of your work.

Please select one ...

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

Please click on the word that best corresponds with your work-based cyber communication experience over the last six months:

16. Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g., sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses, bonus).

Please select one ...

17. Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm.

Please select one ...

18. Being exposed to unmanageable workloads.

Please select one ...

19. Threats of violence of physical abuse.

Please select one ...

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

PART TWO

WORKPLACE OUTCOMES

The following three (3) questions will investigate three outcomes pertaining to participants' work life experience throughout the past six month by which to determine the effect of negative workplace cyber communication on employee health and job performance.

Please click on the line that best corresponds with your experience over the last six months:

1. Overall, how satisfied are you in your job?

Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Do you have any further comments?
○	○	○	○	○	

2. Overall, how would you rank your experiences at work?

Very negative	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Very Positive	Do you have any further comments?
○	○	○	○	○	

3. How stressful do you find your work environment?

Very Unstressful	Unstressful	Neutral	Stressful	Very Stressful	Do you have any further comments?
○	○	○	○	○	

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

PART THREE

30 Questions - ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please describe the general climate within your organisation; the term 'organisation' means the smallest work unit that is meaningful to you. This may be a work group, team, branch, division, department, agency, office or other subdivision.

1. The assignments to this organisation are clearly defined.

Please select one ...

2. In this organisation, we set very high standards for performance.

Please select one ...

3. We don't rely too heavily on individual judgement; almost everything is double checked.

Please select one ...

4. If you make a mistake in this organisation, you will definitely be criticized.

Please select one ...

5. People are proud of belonging to this organisation.

Please select one ...

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

6. The policies and goals of this organisation are clearly understood.

Please select one ...

7. The goals I am supposed to achieve in my are realistic.

Please select one ...

8. There is a feeling of pressure to continually improve our personal and group performance.

Please select one ...

9. Our philosophy emphasises that people should solve problems by themselves.

Please select one ...

10. There is not enough reward and recognition given in this organisation for doing good work.

Please select one ...

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

11. People in this organisation don't really trust each other very much.

Please select one ...

12. Things often seem to be pretty disorganised around here.

Please select one ...

13. In this organisation, I am given a chance to participate in setting the performance standards for my job.

Please select one ...

14. In this organisation, people don't seem to take much pride in the excellence of their performance.

Please select one ...

15. Management frowns upon your checking everything with them; if you think you've got the right approach, you just go ahead.

Please select one ...

16. We have a promotion system that helps the best person rise to the top.

Please select one ...

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

17. People in this organisation tend to be cool and aloof toward each other.

Please select one ...

18. Our productivity sometimes suffers from lack of organisation and planning.

Please select one ...

19. I very seldom sit down with my manager to review my overall performance and effectiveness.

Please select one ...

20. Management sets challenging goals.

Please select one ...

21. In this organisation, people are rewarded in proportion to the excellence of their job performance.

Please select one ...

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

22. In this organisation, performance is evaluated regularly against agreed upon

goals and standards.

Please select one ...

23. The standards in this organisation do not usually demand the maximum effort of every individual.

Please select one ...

24. There is not much encouragement to take on increased responsibility in this organisation.

Definitely Agree

25. The rewards and encouragements that you get usually outweigh the threats and criticisms.

Please select one ...

26. There is a lot of warmth in the relationships between management and other personnel in this organisation.

Please select one ...

Anonymous Public Sector Workplace Survey - Cyber Communications (PhD Research)

27. I have had very little opportunity to say what I think about the goals and standards that are set for my work.

Please select one ...

28. In this organisation, people are encouraged to initiate projects that they think are important.

Please select one ...

29. Good performance is recognised fairly quickly in this organisation.

Please select one ...

30. I have a clear idea of what I am supposed to do in my job.

Please select one ...

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Thank you for your time.

Submit

Appendix H Email from CPSU

From: Laura Hart [Laura.Hart@cpsu.org.au]
Sent: Thursday, 20 March 2014 11:22 AM
To: 'felicity.lawrence@student.qut.edu.au'
Cc: Dermot Browne
Subject: RE: Media Inquiry | Anonymous PS workplace cyber-communications survey (PhD research)
Now up at http://www.cpsu.org.au/news/aps-workplace-cyber-communications

Kind regards,

Laura Hart

CPSU Web Manager | Campaign and Communications Unit | ph 02 8204 6904 | 0409 608 256 | website www.cpsu.org.au | member service centre 1300 137 636
-----Original Message-----
From: Dermot Browne
Sent: Thursday, 20 March 2014 11:00 AM
To: Laura Hart
Cc:
Subject: FW: Media Inquiry | Anonymous PS workplace cyber-communications survey (PhD research)
Hi Laura

Can you please post this on our site - outside pay wall - and send link to felicity

when it is done

-----Original Message-----
From: Felicity Lawrence [mailto:]
Sent: Thursday, 20 March 2014 10:59 AM
To: Dermot Browne
Subject: Media Inquiry | Anonymous PS workplace cyber-communications survey (PhD research)

Dear Mr Browne

I am a doctoral student working in collaboration with the University of Sheffield, UK; my research seeks to investigate workplace cyber-communications within the Australian public sector. (Attached is my university's Human Ethics Committee approval; survey launch approval was provided 17/3/14).

I am writing to enquire whether the CPSU would be interested in promulgating my anonymous survey to public sector union members via the CPSU website or newsletters, as this Phase of my research requires a convenience sample of 400+ nation-wide public sector participants.

My survey plus background material can be found at the following URL link:

- http://survey.qut.edu.au/f/179689/20e4/

I have developed some language (below) that could potentially be used as a CPSU website or newsletter article. At this stage I'm looking to close the survey Friday 18th April.

Many thanks for your consideration.

Felicity Lawrence

Doctoral student

Queensland University of Technology

m:0414325471

-Invitation to participate in doctoral research into Australian Public Sector (PS) Workplace Cyber-Communications

For anyone who works in the public service, this is your opportunity to have your say!

Public servants across Australia are invited to participate in an anonymous PS Workplace Cyber-Communications Survey currently being conducted through the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), in collaboration with the University of Sheffield, UK.

This survey will gather anonymous data from public servants' about their perceptions regarding negative workplace cyber-communications and any impact on health and work performance.

The survey together with background material can be found at:

URL link - http://survey.qut.edu.au/f/179689/20e4/

This survey will take between 10-12 minutes and has been approved by QUT's Human Ethics Committee.

Feel free to share this link with your PS work mates!

Note: This survey will close on Friday 18th April 2014

Appendix I Cyber technologies

Identified by Study 2 survey respondents

Substantiating Quotes

Email. Extracts taken from Study 2's qualitative survey respondents, numbers 1_96, 1_18, 1_65, 1_18, 1_301 and 1_241:

- (1_96) "Distribution of emails attacking the behaviour of staff under investigation where it is fully known who the topic concerns."
- (1_18) "Not responding to/ignoring emails (especially important ones)."; (1_65) "forwarding emails clearly only intended for the recipient."
- (1_18) "Not responding to/ignoring emails (especially important ones)." (1_301) "Direct aggression, including the use of inappropriate and unprofessional language, by a manager to a staff member directly via email. This need not require the involvement of others, but of course if others are copied in on the email the bullying fallout s worse." and
- (1_241) "writing emails or parts of emails in CAPS (to imply shouting)."

Telephone. *Extracts taken from Study 2's survey Respondent numbers 1_95, 1_62, 1_259, 1_248, 1_67 and 1_402:*

- (1_95) "One of my staff received a phone call from my boss, the Senior Executive Band 1, who then swore at her over the phone for a full five minutes."
- (1_62) "Yelling and swearing in phone conversation (that are always denied)." (1_259) "Hanging up the phone on someone. Using offensive language or an aggressive tone."
- (1_248) "Persistent harassing phone calls and threatening messages re bad events happening to me or threats of legal action against me."
- (1_67) "Receiving abusive email [and telephone] calls from manager, including swearing." and

- (1_402) “Being abused verbally on the phone by clients including swearing, name calling and sometimes threats.”

Text messaging. *Survey respondents numbers 1_281, 1_370 and 1_33:*

- (1_281) “Text messages from senior staff that attack you personally, for example “What were you thinking? I couldn’t have made myself plain - talking to you is like talking to a moron.”
- (1_370) “Abusive texts and emails.” and
- (1_33) “Intimidating and/or rude emails/texts/calls/posts.”

Instant messaging. Survey Respondent numbers 1_397, 1_190, 1_70, and 1_216:

- (1_397) “Instant messaging on workplace messenger programs about individuals or gossiping about them.”
- (1_190) “Colleagues all situated on-site (sitting in the same building/location) using their instant messaging to have private conversations about others in the same location.”
- (1_70) “Using workplace instant messaging system to constantly make derogatory comments about a person. i.e., X could replace Y as Santa, they are certainly the right shape for it.”
- (1_79) “Using workplace instant messaging system to put down person you are supervising (i.e., this person is totally useless).”
- (1_216) “Using instant messaging to gossip about workplace colleagues.”

Video conferencing. *Survey Respondent #1_96:*

- (1_96) “Muting of the web conference participants by the convenor who disagrees with a particular point of view.”

Social media websites. Survey respondents numbered 1_327, 1_99, 1_87, 1_101, 1_15, 1_318, 1_48 and 1_93:

- (1_327) "Snooping/stalking employees outside the workplace particularly through social media sites."
- (1_99) "Frontline staff are having their work performance publicised on YouTube by disgruntled clients (public) who are unhappy with the longer waiting queues at Centrelink and Medicare."
- (1_87) "A Facebook comment that I made on my private Facebook page was shared on the work email, and I found out when a friend pointed it out to me. Receiving rude or disparaging emails from my clients."
- (1_101) "I still don't know who emailed my private Facebook comment around at work..."
- (1_15) "Using your name and photograph on a Facebook or Twitter account to make adverse personal comments or observations about your life, beliefs, work situation or particular incidents may not only breach privacy, but also have serious work ramifications in a Government office."
- (1_318) "I had two staff members that used social media (Facebook) to harass me over a 22 month period. This included derogatory comments, abuse and threats."
- (1_48) "Facebook and use it to gain power and control over others in the workplace." and
- (1_93) "A person at work posted a picture of a gay employee on the work collaboration website (like Facebook) and made rude comments about the employee - it was eventually removed."

Appendix J Statistical Tables

1. EFA cyber negative acts questionnaire – workplace cyberbullying

Table L.1.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.928
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4811.180
	df	171
	Sig.	.000

Table L.2.

Rotated Component Matrix

	Component	
	1	2
NAQ 13. Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines.	.751	
NAQ 02 Being ordered to do work through electronic means below your level of competence.	.725	
NAQ 18. Being exposed to unmanageable workloads.	.700	
NAQ 15. Excessive monitoring of your work.	.677	.353
NAQ 03 Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks.	.665	
NAQ 11. Having your opinions and views ignored.	.651	.499
NAQ 10. Persistent criticism of your work and effort.	.644	.502
NAQ 05 Being ignored or excluded.	.598	.477
NAQ 09 Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes.	.555	.525
NAQ 16. Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g., sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses, bonus).	.548	

NAQ 06 Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e., habits and background), your attitudes or your private life.		.754
NAQ 17. Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm.		.738
NAQ 12. Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with.		.726
NAQ 04 Spreading of gossip and rumours about you.	.403	.641
NAQ 01 Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work.	.509	.556
NAQ 08 Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job.	.472	.547
NAQ 07 Being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage).	.371	.540
NAQ 14. Having allegations made against you.	.483	.512
NAQ 19.Threats of violence of physical abuse.		.480

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Table L.3.

Total Variance Explained

	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.436	28.612	28.612
2	4.696	24.714	53.326

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Reliability – WORKPLACE CYBERBULLYING: CNAQ FACTOR 1

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Table L.4.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	463	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	463	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table L.5.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.892	10

Table L.6.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
NAQ 13. Being given tasks with unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines.	19.50	63.307	.556	.887
NAQ 02 Being ordered to do work through electronic means below your level of competence.	19.99	63.693	.643	.880
NAQ 18. Being exposed to unmanageable workloads.	19.33	63.530	.532	.889
NAQ 15. Excessive monitoring of your work.	19.96	60.189	.695	.877
NAQ 03 Having key areas of responsibility removed or replaced with more trivial or unpleasant tasks.	19.89	63.098	.643	.880
NAQ 11. Having your opinions and views ignored.	19.57	60.813	.742	.873

NAQ 10. Persistent criticism of your work and effort.	20.18	62.370	.732	.875
NAQ 05 Being ignored or excluded.	19.77	62.134	.653	.880
NAQ 09 Repeated reminders of your errors or mistakes.	20.18	64.468	.664	.880
NAQ 16. Pressure not to claim something which by right you are entitled to (e.g., sick leave, holiday entitlement, travel expenses, bonus).	20.29	68.093	.488	.890

Reliability – WORKPLACE CYBERBULLYING: CNAQ FACTOR 2

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Table L.7.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	463	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	463	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table L.8.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.862	9

Table L.9.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
NAQ 06 Having insulting or offensive remarks made about your person (i.e., habits and background), your attitudes or your private life.	12.01	19.812	.753	.830
NAQ 17. Being the subject of excessive teasing and sarcasm.	12.27	22.683	.617	.845
NAQ 12. Practical jokes carried out by people you don't get on with.	12.48	24.843	.448	.860
NAQ 04 Spreading of gossip and rumours about you.	12.13	21.075	.702	.836
NAQ 01 Being humiliated or ridiculed in connection with your work.	12.10	21.902	.635	.843
NAQ 08 Hints or signals from others that you should quit your job.	12.25	22.378	.608	.846
NAQ 07 Being the target of spontaneous anger (or rage).	12.02	23.212	.574	.849
NAQ 14. Having allegations made against you.	12.10	22.224	.625	.844
NAQ 19.Threats of violence of physical abuse.	12.66	27.017	.344	.868

2. EFA organisational culture questionnaire

Table L.10.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.931
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	5707.513
	df	435
	Sig.	.000

Table L.11.

Rotated Component Matrix

	Component		
	1	2	3
OCQ29. Good performance is recognised fairly quickly in this organisation.	.789		
OCQ16. We have a promotion system that helps the best person rise to the top.	.775		
OCQ21. In this organisation, people are rewarded in proportion to the excellence of their job performance.	.770		
OCQ13. In this organisation, I am given a chance to participate in setting the performance standards for my job.	.724		
OCQ27R. I have had very little opportunity to say what I think about the goals and standards that are set for my work (Reversed)	.722		
OCQ05. People are proud of belonging to this organisation.	.707		
OCQ28. In this organisation, people are encouraged to initiate projects that they think are important.	.703		
OCQ26. There is a lot of warmth in the relationships between management and other personnel in this organisation.	.693		
OCQ11R. People in this organisation don't really trust each other very much (Reversed)	.681		
OCQ10R. There is not enough reward and recognition given in this organisation for doing good work.	.633		
OCQ25. The rewards and encouragements that you get usually outweigh the threats and criticisms.	.597		
OCQ22. In this organisation, performance is evaluated regularly against agreed upon goals and standards.	.582		
OCQ14R. In this organisation, people don't seem to take much pride in the excellence of their performance (Reversed)	.582		
OCQ19R. I very seldom sit down with my manager to review my overall performance and effectiveness (Reversed)	.572		
OCQ01. The assignments to this organisation are clearly defined.	.570		
OCQ07. The goals I am supposed to achieve in my area are realistic.	.549		-.412
OCQ04R. If you make a mistake in this organisation, you will definitely be criticized (Reversed)	.542		
OCQ30. I have a clear idea of what I am supposed to do in my job.	.538		
OCQ02. In this organisation, we set very high standards for performance.	.522		
OCQ17R. People in this organisation tend to be cool and aloof toward each other (Reversed)	.521		
OCQ24R. There is not much encouragement to take on increased responsibility in this organisation (Reversed)	.517		.460
OCQ06. The policies and goals of this organisation are clearly understood.	.433	.432	
OCQ18R. Our productivity sometimes suffers from lack of organisation and planning (Reversed).		.652	
OCQ12R. Things often seem to be pretty disorganised around here (Reversed)	.455	.591	
OCQ23R. The standards in this organisation do not usually demand the maximum effort of every individual.		.556	
OCQ03R. We don't rely too heavily on individual judgement; almost everything is double checked.		.415	
OCQ15. Management frowns upon your checking everything with them; if you think you've got the right approach, you just go ahead.		.373	

OCQ08. There is a feeling of pressure to continually improve our personal and group performance.			.621
OCQ09. Our philosophy emphasises that people should solve problems by themselves.			.587
OCQ20. Management sets challenging goals.			.561

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.[a]
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table L.12.

Total Variance Explained

	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.221	30.738	30.738
2	2.303	7.677	38.415
3	1.981	6.605	45.020

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Reliability OCQ Factor 1

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Table L.13.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	462	99.8
	Excluded[a]	1	.2
	Total	463	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table L.14.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.930	22

Table L.15.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
OCQ01. The assignments to this organisation are clearly defined.	60.01	274.436	.581	.927
OCQ02. In this organisation, we set very high standards for performance.	59.55	277.012	.527	.928
OCQ04R. If you make a mistake in this organisation, you will definitely be criticized (Reversed)	60.50	275.274	.554	.928
OCQ05. People are proud of belonging to this organisation.	59.85	273.196	.653	.926
OCQ06. The policies and goals of this organisation are clearly understood.	59.97	279.509	.474	.929
OCQ07. The goals I am supposed to achieve in my area realistic.	60.39	274.634	.552	.928
OCQ10R. There is not enough reward and recognition given in this organisation for doing good work.	60.81	275.624	.570	.927
OCQ11R. People in this organisation don't really trust each other very much (Reversed)	60.30	272.765	.632	.926
OCQ13. In this organisation, I am given a chance to participate in setting the performance standards for my job.	59.81	270.630	.644	.926
OCQ14R. In this organisation, people don't seem to take much pride in the excellence of their performance (Reversed)	59.63	277.682	.551	.928
OCQ16. We have a promotion system that helps the best person rise to the top.	60.83	270.466	.703	.925
OCQ17R. People in this organisation tend to be cool and aloof toward each other (Reversed)	59.69	281.185	.482	.929
OCQ19R. I very seldom sit down with my manager to review my overall performance and effectiveness (Reversed)	60.05	273.420	.542	.928
OCQ21. In this organisation, people are rewarded in proportion to the excellence of their job performance.	60.75	271.374	.699	.925
OCQ22. In this organisation, performance is evaluated regularly against agreed upon goals and standards.	59.87	274.603	.547	.928
OCQ24R. There is not much encouragement to take on increased responsibility in this organisation (Reversed)	59.89	276.157	.466	.930
OCQ25. The rewards and encouragements that you get usually outweigh the threats and criticisms.	60.38	272.301	.579	.927

OCQ26. There is a lot of warmth in the relationships between management and other personnel in this organisation.	60.40	272.644	.647	.926
OCQ27R. I have had very little opportunity to say what I think about the goals and standards that are set for my work (Reversed)	60.04	267.606	.694	.925
OCQ28. In this organisation, people are encouraged to initiate projects that they think are important.	60.39	273.110	.657	.926
OCQ29. Good performance is recognised fairly quickly in this organisation.	60.55	269.593	.759	.924
OCQ30. I have a clear idea of what I am supposed to do in my job.	59.48	275.764	.548	.928

Reliability – OGANISATIONAL CULTURE: OCQ Factor 2

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Table L.16.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	463	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	463	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table L.17.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.521	5

Table L.18.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
OCQ18R. Our productivity sometimes suffers from lack of organisation and planning (Reversed).	9.76	7.878	.400	.399
OCQ12R. Things often seem to be pretty disorganised around here (Reversed)	9.46	7.608	.413	.387
OCQ23R. The standards in this organisation do not usually demand the maximum effort of every individual.	9.38	7.929	.291	.464
OCQ03R. We don't rely too heavily on individual judgement; almost everything is double checked.	9.17	8.533	.187	.533
OCQ15. Management frowns upon your checking everything with them; if you think you've got the right approach, you just go ahead.	9.27	9.024	.182	.527

Reliability – ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE: OCQ Factor 3

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Table L.19.

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	463	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	463	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table L.20.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.420	3

Table L.21.

Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
OCQ08. There is a feeling of pressure to continually improve our personal and group performance.	6.49	3.320	.325	.201
OCQ09. Our philosophy emphasises that people should solve problems by themselves.	7.19	3.352	.218	.390
OCQ20. Management sets challenging goals.	6.95	3.270	.221	.386

Nonparametric Correlations

Table L.22.

Nonparametric correlations

			01 WORKPLACE BULLYING LEVEL FACTOR 1 (13, 2, 18, 15, 3, 11, 10, 5, 9, 16)	02 WORKPLACE BULLYING LEVEL FACTOR 2 (6, 17, 12, 4, 1, 8, 7, 14, 19)	03 WPOC03 WORKPLACE STRESS: How stressful do you find your work environment?	04 WPOC02 OVERALL WORK PERFORMANCE: Overall, how would you rank your experiences at work?	05 WPOC01 JOB SATISFACTION: Overall, how satisfied are you in your job?	06 ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE FACTOR 1 (29,16, 21, 13, 27R, 05, 28, 26, 11R, 10R, 25, 22, 14R, 19R, 01, 07, 04R, 30, 02, 17R, 24R)
Spearman's rho	01 WORKPLACE BULLYING LEVEL FACTOR 1 (13, 2, 18, 15, 3, 11, 10, 5, 9, 16)	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.708**	.524**	-.701**	-.545**	-.683**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	463	463	463	463	463	463
	02 WORKPLACE BULLYING LEVEL FACTOR 2 (6, 17, 12, 4, 1, 8, 7, 14, 19)	Correlation Coefficient	.708**	1.000	.448**	-.621**	-.484**	-.581**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	463	463	463	463	463	463
	03 WPOC03 WORKPLACE STRESS: How stressful do you find your work environment?	Correlation Coefficient	.524**	.448**	1.000	-.520**	-.275**	-.333**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
		N	463	463	463	463	463	463
	04 WPOC02 OVERALL WORK PERFORMANCE: Overall, how would you rank your experiences at work?	Correlation Coefficient	-.701**	-.621**	-.520**	1.000	.624**	.690**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
		N	463	463	463	463	463	463
	05 WPOC01 JOB SATISFACTION: Overall, how satisfied are you in your job?	Correlation Coefficient	-.545**	-.484**	-.275**	.624**	1.000	.670**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000
		N	463	463	463	463	463	463
	06 ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE FACTOR 1 (29,16, 21, 13, 27R, 05, 28, 26, 11R, 10R, 25, 22, 14R, 19R, 01, 07, 04R, 30, 02, 17R, 24R)	Correlation Coefficient	-.683**	-.581**	-.333**	.690**	.670**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
		N	463	463	463	463	463	463

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).